

# GUIDE TO BYZANTINE ICONOGRAPHY

VOLUME TWO

By Constantine Cavarinos

Detailed, illustrated explanation of ten major icons of the Festal cycle and of the iconography of God (the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), of the Panagia or Theotokos, of Saint John the Baptist and of the Angels, followed by illuminating remarks of Saint Nectarios of Aegina and Photios Kontoglou on iconographic "Types" and "Archetypes."



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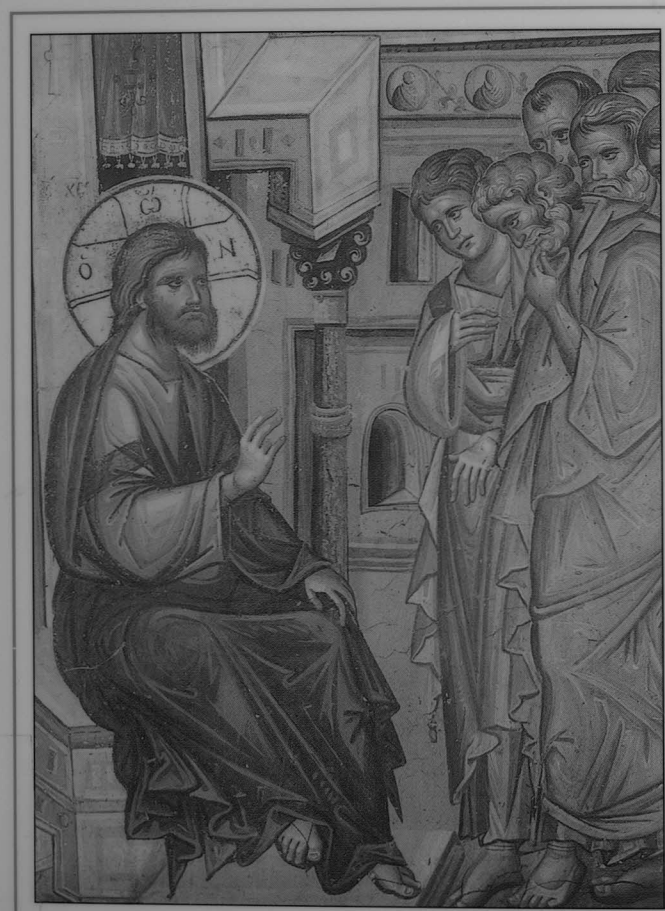
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GUIDE TO BYZANTINE ICONOGRAPHY

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VOLUME TWO



BY CONSTANTINE CAVARNOS



PANAGIA HODEGETRIA PAMMAKARISTOS

*Panel Mosaic icon on the iconostasis of the Church of Saint George,  
the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Eleventh century.*



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CONSTANTINE CAVARNOS

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2001





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## PREFACE

**I**N THE FIRST VOLUME of this work, after a long Introduction in which I explain many significant features of Byzantine Iconography, I discuss in Part One Proskynetária and the Iconostasis used in churches that follow the Byzantine Tradition of iconographic decoration. Next, in Part Two, I explain in detail the Three Cycles used in churches so decorated: the Doctrinal, the Liturgical, and the Festal. I conclude with an extended explanation of Saint John Damascene's defense of iconography and the veneration of holy icons.

The present volume begins as a continuation of Chapter III of Part Two of the first volume. There, I explained the festal icons of the Dodekáorton, namely, those of the Annunciation, the Nativity of Christ, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, the Baptism, the Transfiguration, the Raising of Lazarus, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, Pentecost, and the Dormition of the Theotokos. In this volume, we begin with a description and explanation of ten other icons of the Festal Cycle that are of special importance, being in various ways highly didactic and spiritually uplifting. The first of these are two icons which are related to the church services of the Holy and Great Week, in particular, the icon of The Holy Washing of the Disciples' Feet and the Mystical Supper.

Then we proceed to the icon that depicts an event which is commemorated in the week that immediately follows the Holy

and Great Week and is called in Greek Diakainésimos Hebdomás, and in English is variously spoken of as "New Week" (the closest approximation to the meaning of the Greek term), "Easter Week," and "Bright Week." The event specially commemorated then is Christ Breaking the Bread at Emmaus, as a confirmation of His Resurrection.

After that we deal with three icons that depict events which are celebrated on three successive Sundays after the Sunday of Thomas, during the period that precedes the Ascension and Pentecost. These icons depict two miracles of Christ that are specially emphasized by the Church: The Healing of the Paralytic and The Healing of the Blind Man, and also the significant event of Christ Conversing with the Samaritan Woman. The last mentioned icon serves to remind us of Christ's interest in persons who were not Jews and that faith in Him results in receiving the grace of the Holy Spirit, called "the water that springeth up into eternal life."

Continuing our discussion of Festal Icons in the chronological order in which they are related to the services of the Orthodox Church, we turn next to the following three icons: The Elevation of the Precious Cross, The Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple, and The Restoration of Holy Icons. The first of these icons portrays a very significant historical event: the discovery of the True Cross by Saint Helen at Jerusalem and the elevation of it from the ambon by the Patriarch of Jerusalem Macarios around the year 325. The second pertains to an important event in the life of the All-Holy Virgin Mary. The last mentioned icon depicts an event that is of great significance in the history of the Church. It commemorates the triumphal victory of the traditionalist Orthodox, who supported the making and veneration of holy icons, over the innovating, heretical iconoclasts, who were against holy icons. This event is celebrated on the First Sunday of the Holy and Great Lent known as "The Sunday of Orthodoxy."

In Chapter II, the iconography of God is explained in detail. It answers the questions of how in Byzantine iconography the fol-

lowing are depicted: The Holy Trinity, the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ at various stages of His life on earth and in various "types."

There follows, in Chapter III, an extensive treatment of the subject of how the Theotokos or Panagia is traditionally portrayed in various "types" holding the Child Christ.

The next chapter is devoted to the iconography of Saint John the Baptist and Forerunner, who is very prominent in Byzantine iconography, both in panel icons and in murals.

Chapter V, the last one, is devoted to an explanation of the various orders of holy Angels and how and where the Seraphim, the Cherubim, the Archangels and the Angels under them are portrayed. Reference is also made to the Fallen Angels and the ways in which they are represented.

After that chapter, I have added an Appendix in which I present some illuminating remarks which Saint Nectarios, Metropolitan of Pentapolis (better known as Saint Nectarios of Aegina), makes on the subject of "Types" in iconography. These I relate to pertinent observations on "Archetypes" made by Photios Kontoglou.

The book closes with a Bibliography, an Index of Iconographic Themes, and a General Index. In the Bibliography are listed works actually referred to in the present volume.

Volume Two does not complete the work *Guide to Byzantine Iconography*. A third volume will be needed; and a considerable amount of very valuable material has already been gathered for it.

CONSTANTINE CAVARNOS

*Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*  
Belmont, Massachusetts  
January, 2000



## SOME COMMENTS ON VOLUME ONE OF *GUIDE TO BYZANTINE ICONOGRAPHY*

*Guide to Byzantine Iconography* by Dr. Constantine Cavarnos is among the very best and most authoritative works on the subject of Byzantine iconography. It is an excellent didactic book for the general reading public and for specialists, as well as a handy guide for the icon painter. In addition to its other merits, this work provides the right terminology for the subjects treated and for the inscriptions of icons. Many of these correct terms appear here in the English language for the first time.

This is a monumental scholarly and authentic work. The Orthodox Church, scholars and artists will feel deeply grateful to Professor Cavarnos for it. All will eagerly wait for the appearance of the Second and Third volumes. Together, these three volumes will constitute a truly comprehensive treatment of the important subject of Orthodox iconography.

Archimandrite Herouvim, Iconographer,  
Skete of Saint Anna, Holy Mountain of Athos,  
in *The Hellenic Chronicle*.

The present volume on Byzantine iconography by Professor Cavarnos is a great contribution to the witness of Orthodoxy in the Western hemisphere. Dr. Cavarnos, a professor of philosophy with deep faith steeped in the rich Orthodox Christian tradition,

## COMMENTS ON VOLUME ONE

writes in a classical way about the distinctive characteristics of Byzantine iconography. This volume is also a guide to the pattern of decorating Orthodox Christian churches with panel icons, wall paintings, and mosaics.

He discusses Byzantine Iconography as a sacred art and describes its history, themes, the way of portraying persons, garments, and objects, and the aesthetics of holy icons. The volume includes numerous illustrations, and relates where various panel icons and murals appropriately belong in the church structure, according to the long and rich tradition of the Orthodox Church.

The work is important for every Orthodox Christian to read in order better to understand the functions and meaning of icons. It includes a concise systematic exposition of Saint John Damascene's treatise in defense of holy icons, numerous references to other holy Church Fathers and modern writers on iconography, a Bibliography, and Indexes.

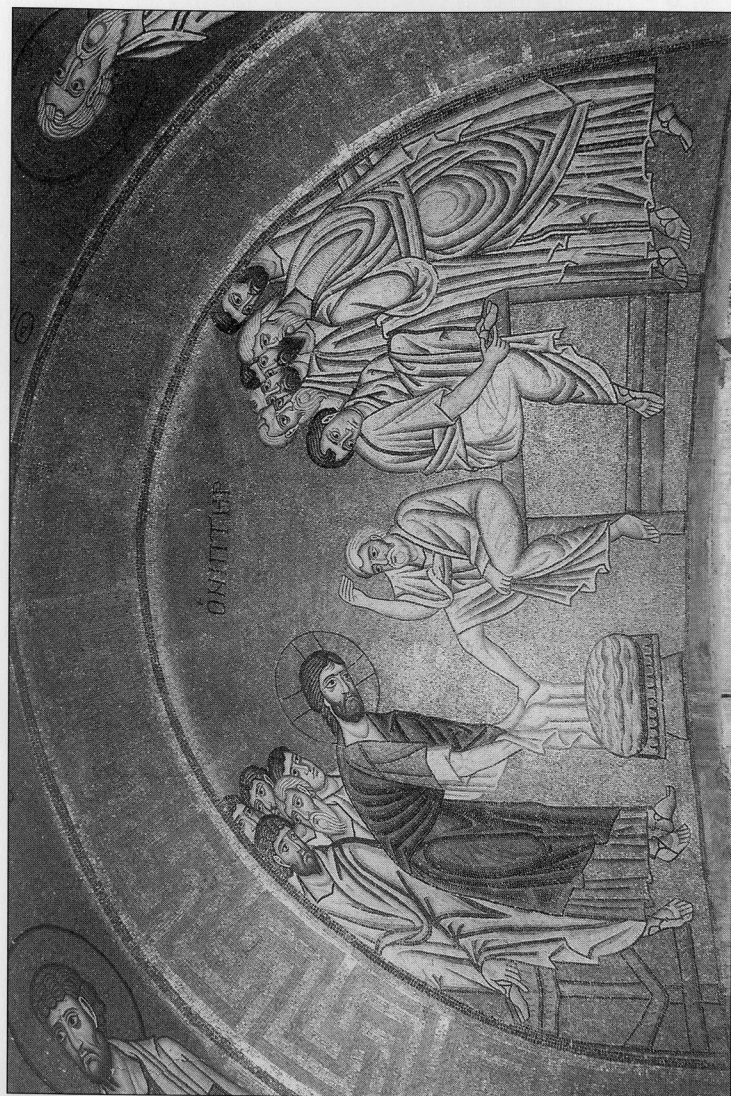
I highly recommend this impressive book to the Orthodox and non-Orthodox, to scholars and the general public.

George C. Papademetriou, Professor of Theology  
in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*.

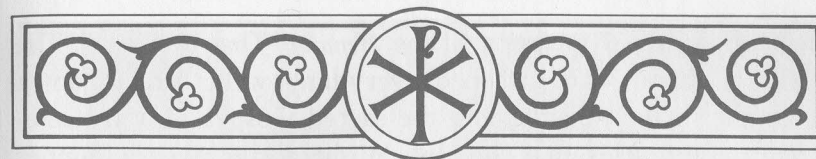
I have read *Guide to Byzantine Iconography* with great interest. It is indeed an important guide to Byzantine iconography.

Demetrios Dukas, Iconographer.





THE HOLY WASHING OF THE DISCIPLES' FEET  
Mosaic. Church of Hósios Lukás. c. 1000



## CHAPTER I

### TEN MAJOR FESTAL ICONS

#### *The Holy Washing of the Disciples' Feet*

AT THE ORTHROS of Holy and Great Thursday is commemorated the Holy Washing of the Disciples' Feet by Christ. This event is celebrated in a grand manner by the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, in the courtyard of the magnificent Church of the Resurrection (usually referred to as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre). Here, the Patriarch, symbolizing Christ, washes the feet of twelve Archimandrites of the Holy Land, symbolizing the Apostles. The first Troparion that is chanted at the Orthros after the reading of the Hexápsalmos ("Six Psalms") mentions the Holy Washing, called in Greek the *Ó ÍEPÒC NÍΠΤΗΡ*. It says:

When the glorious Disciples, during the Washing at the Supper were illuminated, Judas the impious and avaricious, become ill, was filled with darkness; and he delivered Thee the Righteous Judge to the lawless judges. You who are lovers of money, behold him who for money used the gallows; flee from an insatiable soul, which dared to do such things to the Teacher. Glory to Thee, O Lord, Who art good to all.

This event is also mentioned in the Oikos (a kind of hymn) which is read a little later in the Orthros, as well as in the text



that follows the Synaxarion of the *Menaion*. That text says: "The divine Fathers, who ordained everything well, handed down from the divine Apostles and the sacred Gospels that we celebrate these four events: The Holy Washing, the Mystical Supper (the tradition of the awesome *Mysteria*), the extraordinary Prayer, and the Betrayal."

The Holy Washing is further mentioned in the second Troparion of the Ainoi ("Praises") of the same Orthros. It contains these verses:

Judas, who extended his feet to be washed by the Master, deceitfully kissed Him in order to surrender Him to the lawless. . . .

All the texts that I have mentioned are based on a passage in the Gospel according to John, Chapter 13. This is the only place in the New Testament where the Holy Washing is mentioned. Here we read:

And when supper had been prepared,<sup>1</sup> the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him . . . , He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. Then cometh Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto Him, Lord dost Thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean but not all. For He knew who should

<sup>1</sup> The statement in the King James Version: "And supper being ended" is a gross mistranslation of the Greek text, in the light of what follows. The partaking of the food and drink that were set on the table, and constituted the Mystical Supper, followed the washing of the feet—it did not precede it.



CHRIST EXPLAINING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE  
WASHING OF THE DISCIPLES' FEET

*Monastery of Vatopedi (Athos). 1312*

betray Him; therefore said He, Ye are not all clean. So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? . . . If then, your Master and Lord, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example; ye also ought to wash one another's feet (John 13:2-15).

The Holy Washing is depicted by iconography as follows:

A room, at the center of which is a bench, on which is seated Peter the Apostle. He has his right hand close to his head, in a gesture of pointing, in accordance with his statement addressed to Christ: "Lord, wash not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." His right leg, bare up to the knee, is extended towards Christ, Who somewhat bent stands before Peter. Christ has His mantle pulled away from His right arm in order to make possible the free movement of the arm and keep the mantle dry. His tunic, or inner garment, has been pulled up to the elbow for the same reason. On the floor, between Jesus and Peter, is a basin filled with water. Christ is shown wiping with a towel the right foot of Peter over the basin. Sometimes a pitcher with water is shown near the basin or behind Christ.

The other disciples are grouped on the right and the left sides of the composition, five on the left side, behind Christ, and six on the right side, behind Peter. Some of them are shown loosing their sandals, in preparation of having their feet washed. By grouping the disciples in the way just mentioned the iconographer both gives emphasis to Peter by placing him at the center and achieves symmetry in the composition by grouping the rest of the disciples at the right and the left sides of the scene. Emphasis is given to Christ by the use of *contrasting colors*, His outer garment being blue, while the garments of all the disciples are whitish; and by the use of a large halo around Christ's head—He is the only figure shown with a halo.

The disciples are bearded except two, who being rather young

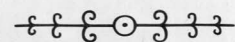
have not yet grown a beard. Peter is depicted as an old man, with a white beard and white hair.

Sometimes, in a secondary scene, Christ is represented seated on a bench speaking to His disciples about the *significance* of His having washed their feet, while they listen to Him attentively. In the Gospel account which was quoted above, Christ says that He thus gave them an "example" to be *imitated* by them. It was a lesson in *humility*. He said: "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet." The virtue of humility is one upon which the Orthodox Church, following Christ's teaching and example, places great emphasis. By having this event depicted vividly by the art of iconography and exhibiting it to the congregations, the Church seeks to teach the virtue of humility.

The icon that depicts this sacred event has the inscription, Ὁ ἹΕΡΟC ΝΗΠΤΗC ("The Holy Washing").

One of the best depictions of The Holy Washing is on the north wall of the narthex of the Church of Hosios Lukas in Boeotia, Greece. It is a mosaic that was done around 1000. My description of how the scene is depicted is based largely on my examination of that superb mosaic, which shows great fidelity to all the principles that underlie authentic Byzantine iconography.

The Washing of the Feet is painted either on a wall of the narthex or on one of the barrel vaults of the nave. It is not given as much prominence as the depictions of the scenes of the Dodekáorton.



### *The Mystical Supper*

The Mystical Supper—improperly called in the West "The Last Supper"—is commemorated in the same service as The Holy Washing at the Orthros of Holy and Great Thursday. This event is depicted in Orthodox iconography as follows:





THE MYSTICAL SUPPER

Panel icon by Photios Kontoglou. Holy Transfiguration Monastery. 1960.

A house inside of which is a table covered with a tablecloth. On the table are plates with food and also rolls of bread, pitchers, and cups. At the center of the table is a plate with a large cooked fish. The table is *semicircular*, not rectangular as in Western representations of the scene, such as those of Giotto (c. 1266–1337) and Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519). Its straight side is in the foreground. About the round side are seated Christ and His twelve disciples.

Typically, Christ is shown at the middle of the round side of the table and thus occupies the center of the composition—something that is in accordance with the principle of psychological perspective. In conformity with the same principle, He is shown distinctly larger than His disciples. His face is sorrowful, His head inclines slightly to the right. With His right hand He blesses, while His left hand rests on the shoulder of his disciple John, who sits near Him on his left side. Peter is seated on His right side. As he is old while John is young, the place at the right, being of greater honor, is reserved for Peter. The rest of the disciples are seated next to John and Peter, five to the left of John and five to the right of Peter.

The facial expression of the disciples shows perplexity, agitation, and sorrow, as a result of the following statement of Jesus: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me” (Matthew 26:21, John 13:21). On the side of the table to Jesus’ left is discernible Judas. He is rendered conspicuous by the fact that he stretches out his hand in order to dip his bread into a dish far from him. This movement is in accord with the answer which Christ gave to the question of His disciples regarding the person who was going to betray Him: “He that hath dipped his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me” (Matthew 26:23; John 13:26).

Typically and properly, all the disciples are shown here without halos. Only Christ has a halo. In some icons of the Mystical Supper the disciples, too, are shown with halos, except for

Judas, in order to single him out. But this is not necessary, since the movement of Judas that was just mentioned suffices for this purpose. Also, the halo is not appropriate for any of the disciples at this stage of their life, prior to Pentecost, at which time they were "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4).

The depiction of the Mystical Supper thus described is based on Gospel accounts. In Matthew we read:

Now the first day of the feast of the unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the passover? And He said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with My disciples. And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. Now when the evening was come, He sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me. And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I? And He answered and said, He that hath dipped his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said. And as they were eating, Jesus took the bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink of it all of you; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:17-29; cf. Mark 14:12-25, Luke 22:7-23, John 13:1-28).

From the Gospels according to Mark and Luke we learn that the Mystical Supper took place in a guest chamber, a large, furnished upper room (Mark 14:14-15, Luke 22:11-12).

The representation of John leaning on Jesus' bosom is based on three verses in the Gospel according to John—two in Chapter 13, and one in Chapter 21. In Chapter 13 we read: "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of the disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom He spoke (that would betray Him). He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?" (13:23-24). And in Chapter 21 there is this verse: "Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple . . . which leaned on His breast at the Supper" (21:20).

The icon has the inscription: Ὁ ΜΥΣΤΙΚὸς ΔΕΙΠΝΟC ("The Mystical Supper").

This icon is generally referred to by the heterodox and not a few Orthodox as "The Last Supper"—an improper term. We should instead use the term "Mystical Supper." The word "Last" denotes *nothing* about the *inner essence* of this great event—it is a term devoid of all spiritual significance. If one wants to use the concept of *time* in referring to the event, instead of "Last Supper" one should speak of the "Perpetual Supper." For as a mystical event the "Supper" takes place at every Divine Liturgy. Thus, while the faithful are receiving Holy Communion, the cantor chants a hymn that begins with these words:

Of Thy Mystical Supper, O Son of God, receive me today as a communicant; for I will not speak of the Mystery to Thine enemies. . . .

Some comments about certain details of the Byzantine way of depicting the sacred event will help the reader to better appreciate it. With regard to the D-shaped table in the scene, David Talbot Rice calls attention to the fact that this type of table, with all the figures seated around the curved side, facing the beholder, is first seen in the Ravenna mosaics and in one of the miniatures of the Rossano Codex, both of the sixth century.<sup>1</sup> This type of

<sup>1</sup> *The Appreciation of Byzantine Art*, London, 1972, p. 161.



arrangement of Christ and the disciples was followed by Byzantine iconographers in the subsequent centuries and by Greek iconographers of the period of Turkish Rule, and is followed today by icon painters who are faithful to the tradition.

It should be added that the D-shaped table can be traced back to the frescoes of the catacombs of the fourth century, where it appears in the depiction of the "Celestial Banquet." We see such a representation in the catacomb of Petrus Marcellinus in Rome.<sup>1</sup> (The inscription "The Celestial Banquet" is believed to have been suggested by a verse in the Gospel according to Luke: "And they shall come from the east and from the west, from the south and from the north, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God" 13:29.) In this catacomb painting we see two other features which appear in the Byzantine icon of the Mystical Supper: the large fish in a plate at the center of the table, and gestures made by the hands of the men seated along the curved side of the table.

Regarding the fish at the center of the table, the iconologist Constantine Kalokyris makes this noteworthy remark: "The fish pictured here is a symbol of Christ, of the One being sacrificed and being offered as food for the faithful. Thus, the icon of the Mystical Supper uplifts the mind to the soul-nourishing table of the Holy Eucharist, to Christ, Who is for us the New Pascha."<sup>2</sup>

In the West, the arrangement of the figures of the Mystical Supper at a D-shaped table began to be abandoned in the latter part of the twelfth century. In a mosaic in the Church of Saint Mark at Venice, probably done in the last quarter of the twelfth century, a *rectangular* table is used. Eleven of the disciples are seated along the back side of the table, one is seated at the right end, and Christ at the left end instead of at the center. Thus, the

<sup>1</sup> See Walter Lowrie, *Art in the Early Church*, New York, 1969, Plate 11, and my book *Hagíou Nektariou, Meléte perí ton Hagíon Eikónon* ("Saint Nectarios, Study Concerning Holy Icons"), Athens, 1997, Plate 8.

<sup>2</sup> *The Essence of Orthodox Iconography*, Brookline, Massachusetts, 1971, p. 38.

principle of *psychological perspective* is completely ignored, as is the *principle of economy of space* (made possible by the use of the D-shaped table). Quite improperly, the *halo* is used for the disciples, *including Judas*!<sup>1</sup>

In the early part of the fourteenth century (c. 1303), Giotto, in painting the Mystical Supper in the Arena Chapel at Padua, placed the Apostles at a rectangular table, and very inappropriately had four of them with their backs to the spectators! With regard to this painting, Rice observes: "Giotto's experiment can hardly be considered a success. . . . To the Byzantine mind Giotto's approach must have seemed, to say the least, worldly, and many would no doubt have gone so far as to consider it well-nigh impious."<sup>2</sup>

Later, Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) depicted the "Last Supper" using a rectangular table, placing ten of the disciples along the back side of the table, Christ at the center, and one disciple at each of the sides. He completely secularized the scene by showing Christ without a halo, beardless, without anything on His face reminding one of the traditional archetype of Christ; and the disciples in a state of unrestrained agitation, making exaggerated, theatrical gestures. Not only Christ and His disciples are depicted naturalistically, but also the table and the room. There is a systematic and emphatic use of natural perspective. In other words, da Vinci's way of representing the Mystical Supper constitutes a total rejection of the spiritual, Byzantine archetype.

Modernistic Orthodox iconographers took this despiritualized representation of the Mystical Supper as their model, and made a few modifications, such as painting Christ with a beard and a halo. Icons of this type are to be seen in many Orthodox churches in this country and in the Old World, especially over the Beautiful Gate. Fortunately, Photios Kontoglou, by his long, unre-

<sup>1</sup> See David Talbot Rice, *Art of the Byzantine Era*, New York and Toronto, 1963, p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> *The Appreciation of Byzantine Art*, p. 161.

lenting struggles, has stemmed the naturalistic, unspiritual tide, and brought back to use the spiritual Byzantine archetype of the Mystical supper, as well as numerous other Byzantine archetypes of holy scenes and personages.

The Mystical Supper is depicted both on walls and on panels. In the monasteries of the Holy Mountain of Athos it has been painted very appropriately in large dimensions in the refectory's large apse, near which is the table where the Abbot sits.



### *Christ Breaking the Bread at Emmaus*

Christ's appearance at Emmaus—a village about twenty-two kilometers from Jerusalem—is commemorated every twelve weeks during the Sunday Orthros. The priest reads in the Holy Bema the passages in the Gospel according to Luke that describes the event, and the psalter chants the First Resurrectional Exaposteilarion. The latter says:

Christ the Life and the Way, having risen from the dead, accompanied Cleopas and Luke, by whom He was recognized at Emmaus as He broke the bread; their souls and hearts were burning, when He spoke to them on the way and by referring to the Scriptures explained His sufferings; let us cry out together with them: He is risen, and was also seen by Peter.

More formally, the event is commemorated on the joyful day of "Bright Tuesday"—the Tuesday after the Sunday of Pascha. At that time, the priest reads the pertinent excerpt from the Gospel according to Luke during the Divine Liturgy, standing at the Beautiful Gate.

The manifestation of Jesus at Emmaus is an important event. Its significance is the same as that of the icon of the Myrrh-bearing Women at the Tomb and of that of the Apostles Peter and John at the Tomb—all seeing it empty and the linen cloths in

which Christ's body had been wrapped laid by themselves—and of His appearance to eleven disciples at Jerusalem. (The first two events preceded Christ's appearance at Emmaus, while the last followed it, as Luke states in Chapter 24 of his Gospel, verses 1–36.) The significance of these events is that they constitute so many *empirical confirmations* of Christ's Resurrection. Luke duly emphasizes Christ's appearance at Emmaus, devoting twenty verses to it.

The event is depicted by traditional iconography as follows:

A house, and in it a small table with food on it. Seated at the table is Christ flanked on His right side by the Evangelist and Apostle Luke, and on His left side by the Apostle Cleopas. Luke is shown on Christ's right hand side because the Church holds him in greater honor than Cleopas. Only Christ is shown with a halo. Typically, He is represented breaking a loaf of bread.

Sometimes, if space permits, a secondary scene, in smaller dimensions, is included. In it there is a mountain far away, and coming from it are Christ, Luke, and Cleopas conversing.

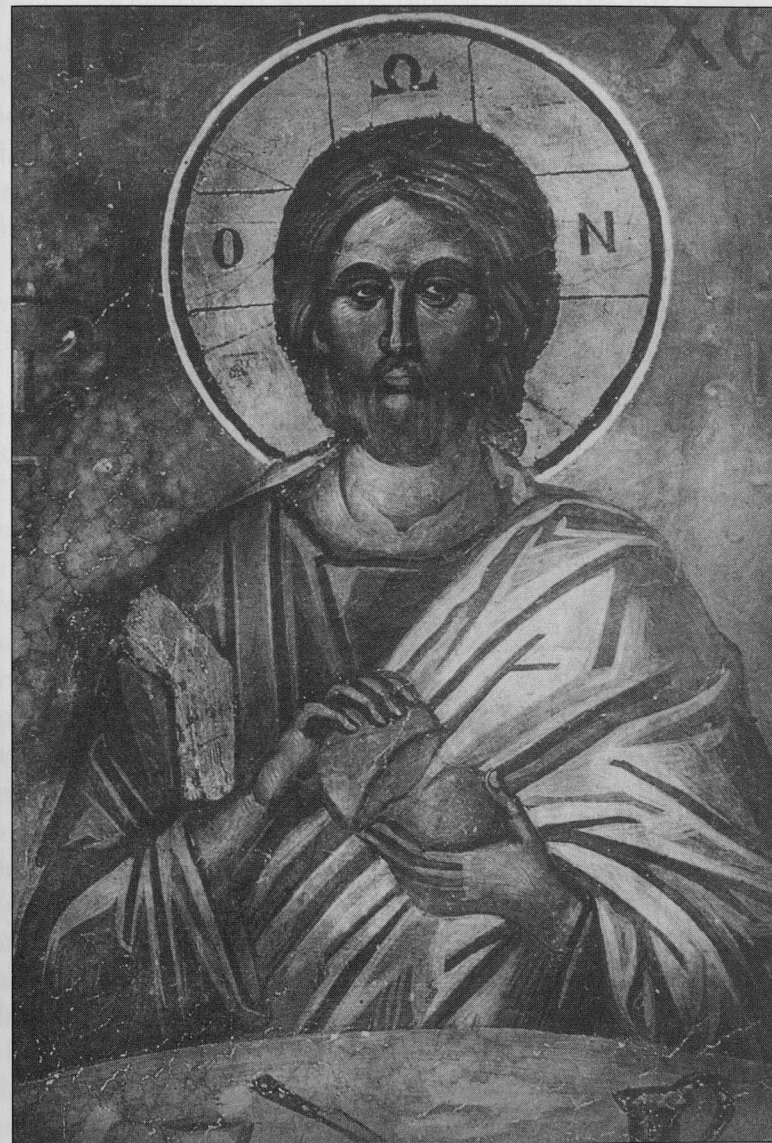
This icon has the inscription: Ὁ ΧΡΙΣΤὸς ΚΑΘΩΝ ΤὸΝ ἄρτον εἰς ἑμμάους ("Christ Breaking the Bread at Emmaus").

Luke describes the event thus:

And, behold, two of them (Luke and Cleopas) went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him. And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? And one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto Him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there these days? And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of



CHRIST BREAKING THE BREAD AT EMMAUS  
*Fresco. Church of Staro Nagoricino, Serbia. 1317.*



CHRIST BREAKING THE BREAD  
*Fresco detail. Monastery of Lavra (Athos). 1535.*



Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. . . . Today is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. . . . Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went, and He made as though He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as He sat at table with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight (Luke 24:13-30).

The Evangelist Mark alludes to Jesus' appearance at Emmaus briefly, but uses a phrase that helps us understand why Luke and Cleopas at first did not recognize Christ. He says: "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene. . . . After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country" (16:9, 12). Mark's statement, "He appeared in another form" (*én hetéra morphé*) explains why sometimes in the icon: "Christ Breaking the Bread at Emmaus" Christ has been depicted "in another form."

This way of depicting Christ—for instance, with short hair—is unwarrantable. The passage in Mark is *not* to be taken to mean that Christ *actually changed His form*, and it was for this reason that He was not recognized by Luke and Cleopas. The clue to the

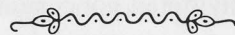
right interpretation of the passage is given by Luke, who saw and conversed with Jesus on the way to Emmaus and at Emmaus. Luke says that he and Cleopas did not recognize Jesus while they were walking and at Emmaus before He broke the bread, because "their eyes were holden" (24:16), and when He broke the bread "their eyes were opened" (24:30-31). Christ's form *seemed* to them different because something had happened to their eyes, that they were hindered from functioning normally, as a result either of the mental excitement that had resulted from what they had heard about the Resurrection of Christ, or of Christ's supernatural action upon them.

One more noteworthy detail concerning the icon of Christ at Emmaus is what He is represented doing. Luke says that Christ "took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to them." The icon *cannot* show *all* these acts: blessing, breaking, and giving. Jesus can be shown doing only *one* of these acts. The act that is most appropriate for depiction is that of breaking the bread. For it is this act—not blessing or giving—that is listed in the inscription of the icon. The acts of blessing and giving, which are mentioned in the Gospel account, are implicit in the act of breaking the bread. Christ would not have broken the bread without first blessing it; and He broke it obviously in order to give of it to the Apostles.

In churches which have a large iconostasis that can accommodate more small icons than those of the Dodekáorton, the icon depicting Christ Breaking the Bread at Emmaus may be placed on the right (south) side of the iconostasis, near other icons that pertain to Christ's Resurrection. As regards its use in the mural decoration of churches, it is to be noted that neither Dionysios of Fourná nor Kontoglou says anything about the place where the scene should be depicted; and it is an event rarely observed in traditionally decorated churches, apparently because its *significance*—that it is an empirical verification of the Resurrection of Christ—tends to be missed.



In Western religious art, too, the scene of Christ at Emmaus Breaking the Bread is seldom seen. The best known such work is that of the famous Dutch painter Rembrandt (1606–1669). Christ is represented here with long hair and bearded, but without the traditional halo, and one of His disciples rather inappropriately having his back turned to the beholder of the painting. A fourth figure, a waiter, is depicted between Jesus and the other disciple, holding a plate with food. This is superfluous and distracts from what is essential: the presence of Christ breaking the bread, watched by Luke and Cleopas.



### *The Healing of the Paralytic*

The third Sunday after Pascha is called the Sunday of the Paralytic. On that day the miracle of the healing of a paralytic by Jesus at the Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem is celebrated. Beautiful hymns commemorating this event are chanted at the Vespers before the feast day and at the Orthros. At the Divine Liturgy, the pertinent passage in the Gospel according to John is read by the priest or deacon, and later a Megalynarion is chanted, summarizing the main point of the miraculous healing of the paralytic.

In iconography, the event is depicted in the following manner:

A pool under five vaults, and an Angel having his hands in the water of the pool. On one side stands Jesus with His right hand extended, blessing the paralytic. Near Him stand His disciples. In front of them, on the other side of the composition, is shown the paralytic man healed, walking and carrying on his back his bed, furnished with bedding. Near him are sick persons lying on beds.

This icon has the inscription: Ὁ ΧΡΙΣΤὸς ἰῶμενος τὸν παραλυτικόν ("Christ Healing the Paralytic").

The hymns I mentioned and the icon are based on the account given in Chapter 5 of the Gospel according to John. Here the Evangelist says:



CHRIST HEALING THE PARALYTIC

Fresco. Monastery of Saint Nikita, Serbia. Fourteenth Century.

Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of invalids, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an Angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, who had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made well? And the sick man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: But while I am coming, another man steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man took up his bed, and walked. . . . Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou hast been made well: sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee (John 5:2-9, 14).

The Gospels tell us that Christ healed other paralytics, too. However, the Church has chosen this instance for special emphasis, dedicating a whole Sunday to it, calling it "the Sunday of the Paralytic." The reason for this is probably the important *didactic statement* made by Jesus in the passage quoted above: "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee." This statement is not contained in the accounts of the cure of other paralytics given in the Gospels. It teaches us that sinning was the cause of this man's paralysis, and therefore that there is a *relationship* between sinning and diseases; and accordingly that we should be careful to avoid sinning.

Christ's admonition to the healed Paralytic about not sinning appears in the hymnography of the Sunday of the Paralytic. Thus, one of the Doxastika of the Vespers includes Jesus' statement: "Thou hast been made well, sin no more." And the Exaposteilariion that is chanted at the Orthros ends with this verse: "Take up thy bed, and turn thine attention to the straight paths."

It should be noted that the icon of the Paralytic carrying his bed has a very long history. Thus, Lowrie says: "As early as the second century we have [in the catacombs] the following New Testament subjects, to mention only those which denote deliverance: the raising of Lazarus, the healing of the woman with an issue of blood, the paralytic carrying his bed, and the Samaritan woman."<sup>1</sup>

The Healing of the Paralytic, as well as Christ Conversing with the Samaritan Woman, and Christ Healing the Blind Man, which themes will be discussed next, are painted both on walls and on panels. There is no fixed place for the mural depiction of these subjects. The panel icons may be placed on the upper tier, either on the north or on the south ends of the iconostasis, before and after the icons of the Dodekáorton.



### *Christ Conversing with the Samaritan Woman*

On the Sunday after the Sunday of the Paralytic—that is, on the fourth Sunday after Pascha—called "The Sunday of the Samaritan Woman," is commemorated Christ's meeting with a woman from the city of Samaria. That woman came to the well of the Patriarch Jacob to draw water for her needs.

As on the Sunday of the Paralytic, beautiful hymns pertinent to the event are chanted at the Vesper Service and at the Orthros. During the Divine Liturgy, the Gospel excerpt that describes Christ's meeting with the Samaritan woman is read. This is a rather long text from the Gospel according to John, Chapter 4, verses 5 to 42.

The gist of the event is well summed up by the Doxastikon of the Ainoi that is chanted at the Orthros. This hymn says:

<sup>1</sup> *Art in the Early Church*, p. 40; cf. p. 58.





CHRIST CONVERSING WITH THE SAMARITAN WOMAN  
*Fresco. Monastery of Stavronikita (Athos). Mid-sixteenth century.*

The Well-spring of the principle of life, Jesus, our Saviour, having come to the well of the Patriarch Jacob, sought water from a Samaritan woman that He might drink. And when she addressed Him and said that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, the wise Creator diverted her by the sweetness of His words rather to seek of Him the everlasting water, which, when she received it, she proclaimed to all, saying: Come, and see Him Who knoweth things secret, and is God Who hath come in the flesh in order to save man.

The icon depicts this event in the following way:

Christ is shown seated on a stone at one side of the scene, near the well which is at the center. At the other side stands the Samaritan woman. Sometimes she is shown holding a bucket with her left hand. Her right hand is extended towards the Lord, with Whom she is conversing. In front of her is a jug. Christ blesses her with His right hand, and in His left hand holds a scroll, symbolic of His Gospel. In the background stand the Apostles, grouped together, looking with wonder.

Sometimes, when space permits, the Apostles are shown coming from the city of Samaria, represented by a fortification wall, followed by Samaritans.

The icon has the inscription: Ὁ ΧΡΗΣΤΟΣ ΔΙΑΛΕΓΟΜΕΝΟΣ Τῇ ΣΑΜΑΡΙΤΑΝῃ, ("Christ Conversing with the Samaritan Woman").

The theme of Christ Conversing with the Samaritan Woman was a favorite one in the catacombs as early as the second century and also in later art. Walter Lowrie aptly attributes this to the following two reasons: first, "partly because it is an instance of Jesus' interest in persons who were not Jews, and secondly, perhaps chiefly, because of the saying [in the Gospel that describes it], 'Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life'" (John 4:14;

<sup>1</sup> *Art in the Early Church*, p. 58; cf. p. 40.



cf. 7:38).<sup>1</sup> The "water" Christ is speaking of is the grace of the Holy Spirit, as we learn from a statement made later on in the Gospel according to John. In Chapter 7 Christ is quoted as saying: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This statement is followed by the explanation: "By this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive" (7:37-39).



### *Christ Healing the Blind Man*

The miracle of the Healing of the Blind Man is commemorated on the Sunday that follows the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman. Christ healed many other blind men too (cf. Luke 7:21), but it was only to the blind man who was *born* blind that the Church dedicated a day for celebrating his healing. The reason for this appears to be the fact that this miracle is *emphasized* in the Gospel in which it appears. It is described in much more detail than the accounts of the healing of other blind men. The story about it appears in the Gospel according to John, Chapter 9, verses 1 to 41. This text provides ample evidence that the healed man was born blind and was known to be blind by the whole community where he lived. It also gives the *reason* why he was born blind and was given light by Jesus: "That the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:3)—that is, the mighty power of God and His great mercifulness.

The icon depicts the miracle as follows:

A street inside the fortification walls of the city of Jerusalem. Standing in the street is a young blind man. He is shown leaning on his walking stick. Slung over his shoulder is a small sack. Christ stands in front of him and anoints his eyes with moistened clay. The expression of Christ is peaceful and compassionate. Behind Him stand a group of His disciples. At the right end of

the composition the blind man is shown alone, bent, washing his eyes with water from a marble basin.

Sometimes, if the area available is large, either the Prophet Isaiah or the Prophet-king David is shown holding an open scroll. On Isaiah's scroll is written: "He took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:17; cf. Isaiah 53:4). On the scroll held by David is the verse: "He who heals all thy diseases" (Psalm 102:3—Septuagint).

The icon has the inscription: Ὁ ΧΡΙΣΤὸς ἰᾶται τὸν ἐκ γένετῆς τυφλόν ("Christ Healing the Man who was Born Blind").

What the icon shows is narrated in the Gospel as follows:

And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which had been blind from birth. . . . He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. . . . He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing (John 9:1, 6-7).

The second Doxastikon which is chanted at the Vespers of the Sunday of the Blind Man sums up the event and its significance as follows:

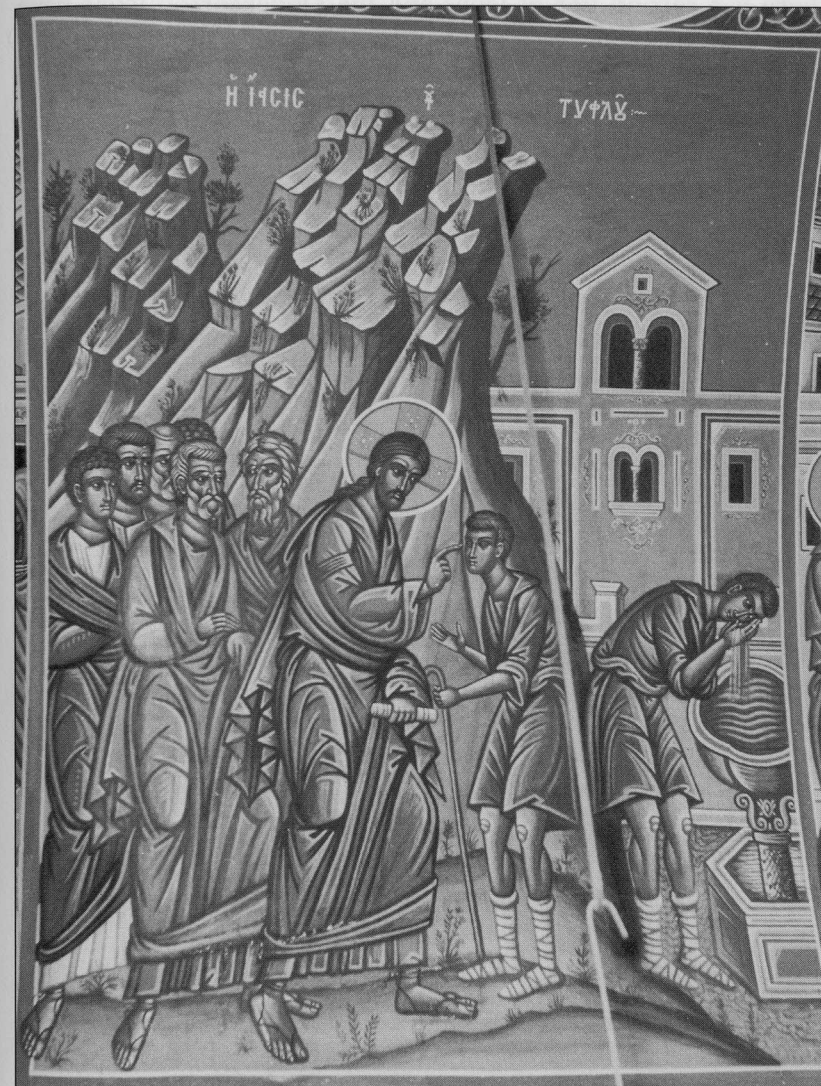
O Christ God, Thou spiritual Sun of Righteousness, Who by Thine immaculate touch didst bestow a twofold enlightenment upon him who from his mother's womb was deprived of sight, illumine Thou the eyes of our souls also, and prove us to be sons of the day, that we may cry out to Thee with faith: Great and ineffable is Thy compassion towards us, O Friend of man; glory be to Thee.

Like The Healing of the Paralytic and Christ Conversing with the Samaritan Woman, the theme of The Healing of the Blind Man was utilized in iconography as early as the second century in the catacomb frescoes.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. Lowrie, *op. cit.*, p. 58; cf. p. 40.



CHRIST HEALING THE BLIND MAN  
Fresco. Monastery of Docheiariou (Athos). 1568.



CHRIST HEALING THE BLIND MAN  
Fresco by Photios Kontoglou. Church at Liopesi, near Athens. 1946.



In churches where the iconostasis is of considerable width and there is a second tier of icons and the Dodekáorton icons have been placed on it, the icon depicting The Healing of the Blind Man is set on it. The scene is also painted on a wall of the main part of the church, when suitable space is available, after the twelve great feasts have been depicted.

One of the most striking and beautiful murals to be seen is in the Church of Zoodóchos Peghí ("The Life-giving Source") at the town of Liópesi, also known by its ancient name, Paiania, which is not far from Athens. This fresco was done by the hand of Pho-tios Kontoglou around 1950.

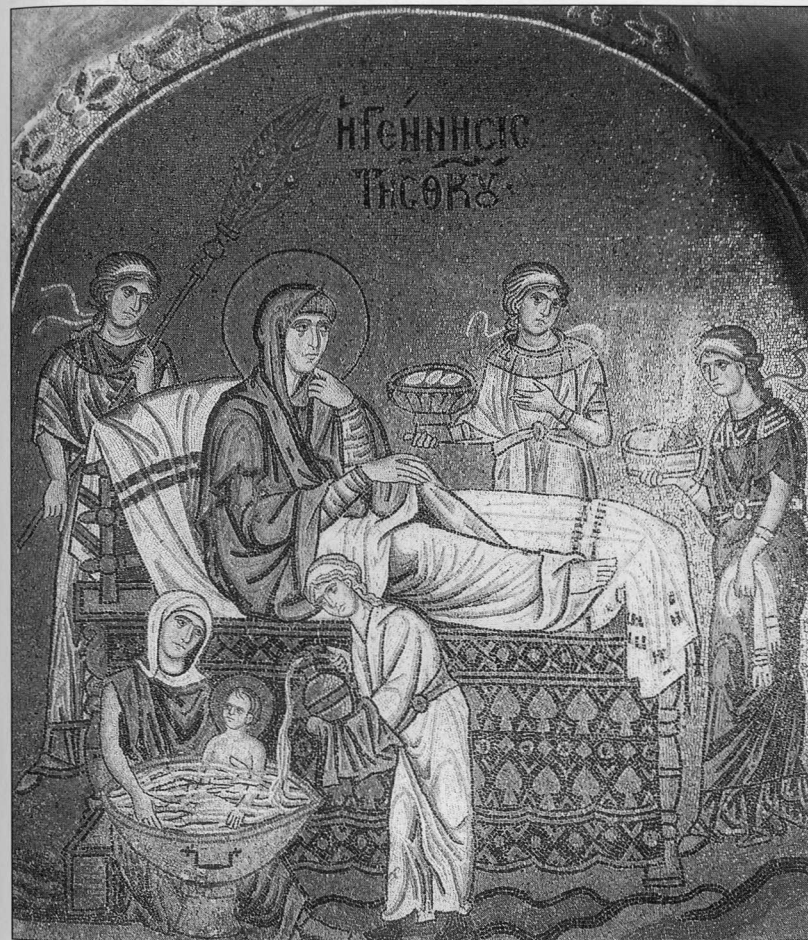


### *The Nativity of the Theotokos*

According to an ancient tradition of the Church, the Theotokos was born about sixteen or seventeen years before the Nativity of Christ, of parents who were barren and advanced in years: Joachim and Anna. Joachim was a descendant of the royal people of David, of the tribe of Judah; while Anna was of the priestly tribe of Levi, daughter of Matthan the priest and Maria.

The birth of the Theotokos is celebrated on September 8. This feast is the first major one in the month of September, which is the first month of the Ecclesiastical year. The celebration begins with Great Vespers on September 7, and continues in the morning with Orthros and Divine Liturgy. Many uplifting hymns are chanted during these services, explaining the great significance of the birth of the Theotokos in sacred history and in praise of her surpassing virtues. Traditional iconography does its part in commemorating the Nativity of the Theotokos in a vivid manner as follows:

Saint Anna is shown reclining on a couch inside a house. She is depicted in large dimensions at the center of the icon. Consis-



THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS  
*Mural mosaic. Church of Daphni. c. 1100.*



tently with the tradition about her, she is shown as a woman advanced in years and of devout character. Attending her are two or three young women, one of whom is bringing her food on a tray. They stand at one side of her, facing her. In some icons, behind her stands Saint Joachim. Below, in the foreground, is shown the infant Theotokos about to be bathed by two women. Sometimes there is a second scene, at the right corner, where she is depicted swaddled in a cradle, attended by a woman. Saint Anna, Saint Joachim, and the Theotokos are shown with halos.

The inscription of the icon, written at the top in a single line or in two lines, is: Τὸ ΓΕΝΕΣΙΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ ("The Nativity of the Theotokos").

Sacred hymnography gives the main point of the significance of the Nativity of the Theotokos as follows, in the Apolytikion which is chanted at the services of the feast:

Thy nativity, O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole world; for from thee hath dawned the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, annulling the curse, and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting.

This theme appears in iconography at least as early as the seventh century.<sup>1</sup> It is seen both in panel icons and in murals. Appropriately, in neither form is it given the prominence that is given to the portrayal of The Nativity of Christ.



### *The Elevation of the Precious Cross*

Of the remaining three festal icons that will be discussed, one, inscribed The Elevation of the Precious Cross, pertains to an event that took place in the reign of Saint Constantine the Great,

<sup>1</sup> See Konstantinos Kalokyris, *He Theotókos eis ten Eikonographían* ("The Theotokos in Iconography"). Thessaloniki, 1972, p. 91.

Emperor of the Byzantine Empire (fourth century), and is commemorated on September 14. The second, called The Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple, is commemorated on November 21. The third festal icon that will be discussed, which has the inscription The Restoration of the Holy Icons, commemorates an event that took place in the ninth century (843), and is celebrated on the first Sunday of the Great Lent, called the Sunday of Orthodoxy.

The celebration of the events which these icons depict is very dear to the Orthodox people. They eagerly go to their churches to attend them.

Every parish church and every main monastic church that is properly equipped with holy icons has panels that depict the three events just mentioned. In some of the churches that have extensive mural decoration, depictions of these events are also to be seen on the north or south wall of the nave.

The Elevation of the Precious Cross is depicted in the following manner:

At the center there is an ambon (pulpit) on which stands the Patriarch of Jerusalem Saint Macarios, holding with both hands the precious Cross and raising it for veneration. Below, on the right side of the ambon, stands the mother of the Byzantine emperor Saint Constantine the Great—Saint Helen—who discovered the Cross. She is dressed in royal costume and holds her hands extended in prayer. In front of the Patriarch stands a deacon, and behind him there is another deacon, holding a large candle. On the left side of the ambon stand other clergymen, official lay persons, and a multitude of common people. They all look upward, towards the precious Cross and the Patriarch. Near the steps that lead up to the ambon stand psaltai (cantors), who wear the peculiar hats which psaltai of that time wore in church.

The icon has this inscription: Ἡ ὙΨΩΣΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΤΙΜΙΟΥ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΥ ("The Elevation of the Precious Cross").



THE ELEVATION OF THE PRECIOUS CROSS  
Fresco. Monastery of Lavra (Athos). 1535.

One of the most remarkable depictions of The Elevation of the Precious Cross is a wall painting in the katholikon of the Monastery of Lavra on the Holy Mountain of Athos. It was done in 1535 by the hand of the great Cretan iconographer Theophanes.

The akolouthia of the Elevation of the Precious Cross is contained in the *Menaion* of the month of September. In it are many sublime hymns which speak of the Crucifixion of Christ and of the Cross, and their significance for mankind. The following Exaposteilarion speaks concisely and eloquently about these events. It says:

The Cross is elevated today and the world is sanctified; for Thou Who didst sit together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, by extending out Thy hands on it, O Christ, didst draw the whole world towards a knowledge of Thee; therefore deem worthy of divine glory those who believe in Thee.

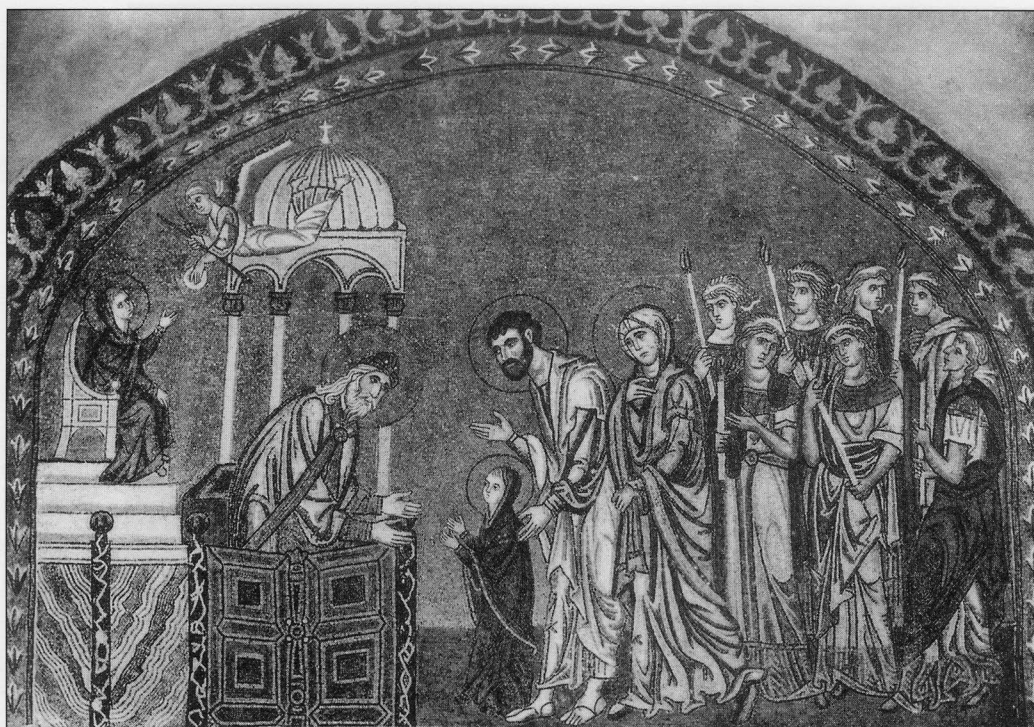
What is said about the Cross in this and the other hymns that are chanted at the feast of The Elevation of the Precious Cross is based on what is said about the Crucifixion and the Cross in the excerpts from Saint Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (1:18-24) and the Gospel according to John (19:6-35) that are read during the Divine Liturgy of that feast, as well as other passages in the New Testament.



### *The Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple*

On November 21 the Orthodox celebrate The Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple. The hymns chanted on that day in commemoration of this event are contained in the November *Menaion*.





THE ENTRY OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE

*Mural mosaic. Church of Daphni. c. 1100.*



THE ENTRY OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE

*Fresco. Church of Studenitza, Serbia. Thirteenth century.*



It is a very joyous feast whose significance is concisely summed up in these words of the Kontakion:

The most pure temple of the Saviour, the most precious bridal chamber and Virgin, the sacred treasury of the glory of God, is on this day brought into the house of the Lord, bringing with her the grace that is in the Divine Spirit. And the Angels of God chant praise unto her: She is a heavenly tabernacle.

The basis for this celebration and for painting the related icon is to be found in the Apocryphal Gospels, not in the canonical ones.<sup>1</sup> However, the way it is interpreted and the Virgin is extolled in the hymns, such as the Kontakion just quoted, rests on what is said about the Theotokos in the Canonical Gospels.

The scene is depicted by iconography thus:

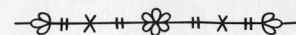
The interior of a temple with an ambon at the left or right side. In the ambon stands the Prophet-priest Zacharias. He is represented as an old man with a pointed beard, wearing priestly vestments, bent a little, with hands stretched out, welcoming the three-year-old Theotokos. She stands at the middle of the scene, near the ambon, with hands stretched out towards Zacharias. Behind the Theotokos stands her father, Saint Joachim, and near him her mother, Saint Anna. Behind or before them is a retinue of young women wearing festive dresses and holding candles.

In another scene, behind Zacharias, at a higher level, is represented the Theotokos seated on a throne that is reached by a stairway of three steps. In front of her is a canopy, near which is a flying Angel that looks at the Theotokos—a gesture of greeting her. She looks up at him with one hand extended towards him. All except the attending maidens are shown with halos.

The icon has this inscription: ΤΑ ΕΙΣΟΔΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ ("The Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple").

<sup>1</sup> Kontoglou, *Ekphrasis*, Vol. I, p. 259; Konstantinos D. Kalokyris, *Athos*, Mount Athos, 1963, p. 18.

Traditionally, the mural depicting this event is painted in the diaconicon—the right (south) part of the Holy Bema. The choice of the Holy Bema is in accord with the introductory verses (*stichoi*) of the Troparia of the Ninth Ode of the Canon that is chanted during the Orthros. These verses end with the refrain that the Theotokos "entered into the holy of holies" (*ta hagia ton hagion*). Thus, the verse that introduces the first Troparion of the Ninth Ode says: "Angels, seeing the entry of the Virgin, were astonished, how with glory she entered into the holy of holies."



### *The Restoration of the Holy Icons*

The feast of the Restoration of the Holy Icons is celebrated, as we noted earlier, on the first Sunday of the Great and Holy Lent, known as the Sunday of Orthodoxy. The hymns that are chanted on that occasion and the texts about the holy icons from the Acts of the Seventh Oecumenical Synod that are read, are contained in the *Triodion*. Prominent in the celebration is a procession with holy icons inside the church.

The following Prosomoion, which is chanted at the Vesper Service, both excellently sums up the significance of the feast and eloquently expresses the joy felt by the faithful who participate in it:

The Church of Christ received exceedingly great adornment through the most joyful restoration of the venerable and holy icons of the Saviour Christ, and of the Mother of God, and of All the Saints; through their restoration she is gladdened and greatly adorned with Grace, the horde of the heretics is driven away, and rejoicing she glorifies God, Who loves mankind and for our sake voluntarily endured suffering.

The icon depicts the feast in the following way:



#### THE RESTORATION OF THE HOLY ICONS

*Fresco. Monastery of Lavra (Athos). c. 1535.*

#### TEN MAJOR FESTAL ICONS

At the center, an icon of Panagia the Hodegetria held on either side by a deacon. At the right stands Saint Methodios, Patriarch of Constantinople, and next to him another hierarch, while to the left of it stands Saint Theodora, empress of the Byzantine Empire, with her son, Michael, a small child, in front of her. Methodios and Theodora are given prominence because Methodios, supported by Theodora, effected the restoration of the holy icons in 843. In the background, at the upper part of the composition, is shown an icon of Christ held by two monks, flanked by a hierarch, monks and a nun. When the space available is large, lay persons are included: men, women, and children holding candles.

The inscription of the icon is: Η ΑΝΑΤΗΛΩΣΙΣ ΤΩΝ ἉΓΙΩΝ ΕΙΚΟΝΩΝ ("The Restoration of the Holy Icons").

Like the Elevation of the Precious Cross, this subject is depicted in the nave, either on the right wall or on the left.





## CHAPTER II

### GOD IN ICONOGRAPHY

#### *The Holy Trinity*

**I**N TRADITIONAL ORTHODOX ICONOGRAPHY there are two ways of depicting the Holy Trinity. One of these is the figure of Christ; the other, the scene called The Hospitality of Abraham. The eminent Byzantinist George A. Soteriou says the following regarding the first:

"Theology had determined prior to the ninth century that in the Person of Christ incarnate the very Holy Trinity had manifested itself; and the beholder believed that in seeing the Son he also saw the Father, according to the statement of Christ, 'And he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father'" (John 14:9, cf. 12:45).<sup>1</sup>

The icon of Christ is also expressive of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit "proceeds" from the Father and is "sent out" by Christ. Thus, Christ tells His disciples: "But when the Comforter (*Parákletos*) is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me" (John 15:26).

The depiction of the Holy Trinity in the scene called "The Hospitality of Abraham" is in the form of three young men near the tent of Abraham and the tree of Mamre, receiving hospitality from Abraham and his wife Sarah. The men are shown with

<sup>1</sup> *Ho Christós en te Téchnē* ("Christ in Art"), Athens, 1914, p. 121.



THE HOSPITALITY OF ABRAHAM  
*Panel icon. Crete. Fifteenth Century.*



halos, seated at a table. Typically, one of them is seated behind the middle of the table, facing the beholder, one is seated near the right side of the table, and the third at the left side. In the rear stand Abraham and Sarah: Abraham at the left and Sarah at the right, both with halos, serving them. Behind Abraham and Sarah is their tabernacle in the form of a building with doorways and windows. Near this is the Oak of Mamre simply, schematically represented.

This icon has the inscription: Ἡ ΦΙΛΟΞΕΝΙΑ ΤΟΥ ἈΒΡΑΑΜ ("The Hospitality of Abraham").

Traditionally, the scene is painted on the wall of the diaconicon—the south side of the Holy Bema. In churches which are dedicated to the Holy Trinity, a large panel icon of The Hospitality of Abraham is placed on the iconostasis next to that of the Theotokos and the Child Christ, and a small icon is put on the official proskynetáron for year-round veneration.

This icon is based on a passage in the book of Genesis, Chapter 18. Here we read:

And the Lord appeared unto him [Abraham] in the plains of Mamre: and he [Abraham] sat in the tent door in the heat of the day. And he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself towards the ground, and said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort your hearts (18:1-5).

As the story continues, it becomes evident that of the three men (in Greek, in the Septuagint, spoken of as *hoi treis andres*) one is addressed by Abraham in the singular as *thou* and *Lord* (*Kyrios*), while the three together are addressed in the plural, as *you* (*hymeis*). It becomes increasingly clear as one reads on, that one of the three men whom Abraham saw in his vision was *God the Son*, Who appeared here in human form, *foreshadowing His*

*Incarnation*, while the other two were holy Angels. Thus, after the conversation between Abraham and the Lord that followed the initial appearance of the three men, in verse 22, we read that *two* of the "men" left and went towards Sodom, while the *Lord* remained and continued His conversation with Abraham: "And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom, but Abraham stood yet before the Lord." At the end of Chapter 18 it is written: "And the Lord went His way as soon as He had left communing with Abraham."

Also to be noted is the fact that immediately after this statement, in the first verse of the next chapter, is this important passage: "And there came the two Angels to Sodom at evening; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face towards the ground." Here, significantly, the two "men" mentioned in verse 22 of Chapter 18 are spoken of as "*Angels*" (*Angeloi*).

The two Angels that appeared in Abraham's vision certainly are *not* to be taken as *likenesses* of God the Father and of the Holy Spirit—since these Divine hypostases are not Angels. The Angels appeared simply as what the Greek Church Fathers call *typoi* of these, that is, as symbols, in order to teach that the one and only God is a Trinity.

In accordance with the above, in Byzantine iconography, a differentiation is made in the depiction of the "three men" whom Abraham saw in his vision: Christ is depicted at the center of the composition with a halo that has an inscribed cross, while the halos of the other two figures, the Angels, are without crosses. In the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore at Rome there is a mosaic depiction of the Hospitality of Abraham dating from the fifth century, in which Christ is clearly distinguished from the other two figures, the Angels, by a mandorla or oval glory that surrounds Him.

In depicting the Hospitality of Abraham, it is not enough to show the three figures seated at a table with food set before them. The icon must include the figures of *Abraham* and *Sarah*, as

well as the other details mentioned in the Genesis account: the *tabernacle* and the *Oak of Mamre*. The inclusion of all these features is *essential*, in order to teach or remind the onlooker that this is only a *vision*, not a representation of God in His actual nature. Their omission, as in Rublev's (c. 1370–1430) famous painting inscribed "The Holy Trinity," is a serious error. For it conveys the idea that the Holy Trinity is a group of three Angels. Further, the icon should have the inscription: "The Hospitality of Abraham," not "The Holy Trinity."

The question may arise, if Abraham saw "the three men" in a *vision, incorporeal*, how is it that it is written that he offered them *food*, which "*they ate*" (Genesis 18:8). The answer is that the eating took place only in appearance. A similar event is described in the book of Tobit in the Septuagint. In Chapter 12 it is written that an Angel of the Lord, Raphael, appeared to Tobit for days, was offered food, and was seen eating it. When the Angel was about to depart, "and go up to Him Who had sent him," he said: "All these days I was seen by you, and I neither ate nor drank anything, but you saw me doing so in appearance" (12:19–20).

Abraham's vision is recalled by the Church Fathers and the hymnographers of the Church, and is spoken of as a reward for his exemplary hospitality. In the Mesonyktikon of Mode III of Byzantine chant, contained in the *Parakletiké*, one of the hymns expresses this view:

God, Who is of three hypostases, appeared in olden time to Abraham at the Oak of Mamre, and through His mercy rewarded Abraham with Isaac for his hospitality.

Another hymn of the same Mesonyktikon says the following:

Being a settler, Abraham was deemed worthy of welcoming, in the form of a type, the one God—Who is of three hypostases and suprasubstantial—in the form of three men.

Something should be said about the depiction of the vision of Abraham in the Latin West after the schism of 1054, and in Orthodox countries after the fall of Constantinople (1453). In

order to propagate and instill the *Filioque* doctrine—which was one of the chief causes of the schism—abandoning the traditional way of depicting the Holy Trinity, the Latins conceived another model. In it, the Father is represented as an old, white-haired man seated at the right side of the painting, blessing the Son, Christ, Who is shown seated at the other side, holding a huge cross with one hand and the Book of the Gospels with the other. Between them, higher than their heads, is shown the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.

This innovative representation of the Holy Trinity has appeared with details modified in one way or another. Thus, in one of the depictions the Father is represented seated holding in His lap the Son, in the form of a young man, Who in turn holds in His hands a dove. The chief point of the novel depiction was to spread the heretical doctrine that the Holy Spirit proceeds from *both the Father and the Son (Filioque)*.<sup>1</sup>

With the passage of time, such paintings became increasingly widespread. From the sixteenth century on, during the period of Turkish rule of Greece and other Balkan countries, when Orthodox peoples were cast into the darkness of ignorance, such paintings came to prevail.<sup>2</sup> Exploiting this ignorance, countless Jesuits and other Latin monks brought to these countries, together with other propagandistic material, large numbers of copper engravings of modernistic Latin religious paintings. The result was that the doctrinal truths which are expressed by traditional icons were increasingly distorted, and the archetypes and principles of Byzantine iconography were more and more abandoned.

Latin propaganda exercised during that period a powerful influence on Russia, too, and deeply affected Russian iconography. Thus altered, Russian icons came to Greece, especially to the Holy Mountain, as another wave bringing ill-grounded Roman Catholic conceptions.

<sup>1</sup> See Ioannis Vranos, *Theoria Hagiographias*, ("Theory of Iconography"), Thessaloniki, 1977.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.



### God the Father

God the Father is represented in traditional iconography as a *hand* that emerges from Heaven blessing. We see this symbolic hand in the Baptism of Christ as depicted in the mosaics of Hósios Lukás (c. 1000) and Daphni (c. 1100).<sup>1</sup> The hand symbolizing God the Father began to be used in iconography much earlier. Thus, we see it in the depiction of the Baptism on the cover of a reliquary that dates from the sixth century and is kept in the Vatican.<sup>2</sup>

The symbolism of the hand is based on Scriptural statements such as "Send Thy hand from above" [Psalm 143 (144):7] and "The hand of the Lord was with him" (Luke 1:66).

In accordance with the tradition of blessing with the right hand when only one hand is used, it is proper to depict the *right* hand, not the left. (In the Baptism at the Church of Daphni the left hand is shown. We must assume that this was done inadvertently.)



### The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is represented in the following three forms: as a *dove* in the icon of the Baptism of Christ; and as a *cloud of geometrical form* in the icon of the Transfiguration; and as tongues of fire, in the icon of Pentecost. These manifestations of the Holy Trinity have been described in Volume One of this work, in the sections that deal with these three festal icons of the Dodekáorton.

<sup>1</sup> See Volume One of this work, pp. 146, 149, 156.

<sup>2</sup> See David Talbot Rice, *Art of the Byzantine Era*, New York and Toronto, 1963, p. 40.

The depiction of the Holy Spirit as a *dove* in the Baptism of Christ scene is based on the account of this sacred event given in the four Gospels (Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22, and John 1:32). The representation of the Holy Spirit as a *cloud* is based on the description of the Transfiguration that appears in the Gospels according to Matthew (17:5), Mark (9:7), and Luke (9:34); and that of the Holy Spirit as *tongues of fire*, in the Acts of the Apostles (2:1-4).

The *cloud* is not shown naturalistically, for it was not a natural phenomenon, was not a physical cloud. It is depicted as a rose-colored geometrical figure having a varying number of angles: four, six, or eight.<sup>1</sup> The geometrical way of depicting it serves to emphasize the fact that what the Apostles beheld on Mount Tabor was not a material cloud, but a phenomenon of another order.

It would definitely be wrong to depict the Holy spirit as an *isolated* dove or cloud of geometrical form, or as isolated tongues of fire, or in a composition *other* than the above mentioned ones. For this would give the impression to the beholders of such icons that the Holy Spirit is in His *real nature*—not as an appearance—a dove, or a cloud, or tongues of fire!



### Christ

In Volume One, I explained how Christ has been depicted by Byzantine iconographers in the *great festal icons*, those of the *Dodekáorton*. We saw that He is depicted in all of them, except the icon of the Annunciation; and that in two of them: The Nativity and The Presentation in the Temple, He is represented as an infant, and in the others as a bearded adult.

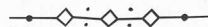
I also explained in that volume how Christ is depicted in the two most important *doctrinal* icons in monumental proportions:

<sup>1</sup> See Volume One, p. 157.



*Christ as the Door* over the doorway that leads from the narthex into the nave, and *Christ Pantocrator* in the central dome.

Enough has been said there about the depiction of Christ in these two groups of icons. Further discussion of them is beyond the scope of this work, except as regards the theme of *Christ Pantocrator*. Christ is depicted as Pantocrator not only in the *dome*, but also on a *panel icon* that is placed on the *iconostasis*, next to the Beautiful Gate, as a "Sovereign" (*Despotiké*) icon. An explanation about the latter will follow in due course, after The Holy Napkin and The Holy Tile.



### *The Holy Napkin*

The earliest icon of Christ according to holy tradition is that known as "The Holy Napkin." This shows *the face* of Christ. The original has not survived, but its archetypal character has come down to us thanks to successive generations of iconographers who have reproduced likenesses of it in churches. In these, the face of the Lord is shown as follows:

It is surrounded by a halo with an inscribed cross. On the left arm of the cross is the letter "Θ;" on the arm over His head, the letter "Ω;" and on the right arm of the cross, the letter "Ν." These three letters say: "HE WHO IS." They are taken from Holy Scripture, and signify God's eternal, non-temporal mode of being, which is not broken up, like ours, into past, present, and future. Thus, in the Gospel according to John, we read: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, Who is (ὁ ὢν) in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (1:18).<sup>1</sup> Over the Napkin on which the face is painted is the inscription: Τὸ Ἅγιον Μανδήλιον ("The Holy Napkin") and at the upper part of the Napkin is inscribed the Greek abbreviation for Jesus Christ: ἸϞ ΧϞ.

<sup>1</sup> See also the *Apocalypse*, 1:8.



THE HOLY NAPKIN

*Fresco. Church of the Protaton (Athos). 1686.*

Sometimes, *inappropriately*, the *date* and the *name of the iconographer* is written at the lower part of the Holy Napkin. If this information is given, it should appear in the lower part of the background, not on the Napkin itself. If the name of the iconographer is written, it should be preceded by the words: ΔΙ' Α ΧΕΙΡΌC ("Through [by] the hand of").

In some non-Greek writings, such as *Theology of the Icon* by the Russian iconologist and iconographer Leonid Ouspensky, the Holy Napkin is termed "The Holy Face." In Greek writings, this term is never used; it is always called ΤΌ ΆΓΙΟΝ ΜΑΝΔΗΛΙΟΝ.

In domed churches, the Holy Napkin is painted on the eastern side of the lower part of the drum of the dome; while in domeless churches it is painted at the middle of the wall that is over the iconostasis.

The origin of the Holy Napkin is described by Kontoglou as follows, in Volume I of his work *Ekphrasis of Orthodox Iconography*:

"The governor of Edessa [in Syria], named Abgar, being moved by piety, sent an artist to paint a portrait of Christ, believing that by means of it he would be cured of leprosy, from which he was suffering. But the artist was unable to portray the character of the God-Man's face. Knowing the faith of Abgar, He asked for a cloth napkin, and wiping His face with it there was imprinted supernaturally the immaculate character of His face on the towel, which he gave to those who had been sent by Abgar. The latter, kissing this towel devoutly, was cured of leprosy."<sup>1</sup>

A much earlier writer, the great philosopher, theologian, and hymnographer Saint John Damascene, who lived in the eighth century, says the following in his magnum opus *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*:

"There is a certain tradition that when Abgar was ruler of the city of Edessa, he sent an artist to make a portrait of the Lord and how, when the artist was unable to do this, because of the

<sup>1</sup> *Ekphrasis*, I, p. 122-123.

radiance of Christ's face, the Lord Himself pressed a piece of cloth to His face and sent this to Abgar, who had so earnestly desired it."<sup>1</sup>

In another major work of his, entitled *Against Those Who Decry the Holy Icons*, Damascene says: "An esteemed tradition has been handed down to us from the beginning, that the king of Edessa, Abgar, set on fire with divine love by hearing of the Lord, sent messengers asking the Lord to visit Him. But if this request were declined, they were ordered to have His likeness painted. Then He, Who is all-knowing and omnipotent, is said to have taken a piece of cloth and pressed it to His face, impressing upon it the likeness of His countenance, which it retains to this day."<sup>2</sup>

After Saint John Damascene, the Seventh Great Holy Oecumenical Synod, which was convoked by the Byzantine Empress Irene, accepted the authenticity of the Holy Napkin as a Divinely produced icon of the Savior Christ, and used it as evidence that the use of holy icons by the Church is not an innovation, as the Iconoclasts held, but an ancient tradition.<sup>3</sup>

The Holy Napkin is said to have survived many vicissitudes and to have disappeared with the destructive Fourth Crusade, which in the year 1204 invaded the capital of the Byzantine empire, the city of Constantinople, where the Holy Napkin was treasured.<sup>4</sup>

Evagrius, a sixth century Church historian, mentions the original Holy Napkin in his *Ecclesiastical History*. He calls it *He Theóteuktos eikón*, "The Icon made by God," and speaks of the circumstances that resulted in this icon not made by hands and its being sent to King Abgar of Edessa.<sup>5</sup> It is mentioned by him as

<sup>1</sup> Book IV, chapter 16.

<sup>2</sup> *On the Divine Images*, New York, 1980, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> See Saint Nectarios, *Melété perí ton Hagíon Eikónon* ("Study Concerning Holy Icons"), edited by C. Cavarnos, Athens, 1997, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, New York, 1978, p. 62.

<sup>5</sup> *Ecclesiastical History*, IV, chapter 27; Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 86, 2745-2748.

one that was already known to the world.<sup>1</sup> "The manner of expression of Evagrius," remarks Saint Nectarios of Aegina, "testifies to information that is *certain*, well grounded, as regards the genuineness of the Divinely produced icon."<sup>2</sup>

It should be added, that Evagrius was not the first writer to mention this icon, as some have asserted. Much earlier than that historian, it was mentioned by the Armenian historian Moses Horen.<sup>3</sup>

The Holy Napkin is the earliest icon of the class of "icons not made by hands," and also the earliest of the class of "miracle-working icons." It is to be called "miracle-working" because, as we noted, according to the tradition about it, King Abgar was cured of his disease upon receiving it and devoutly venerating it. The Greek term for "not made by hands" is *acheiropoietos*. This word appears in the Gospel according to Mark, Chapter 14. Here, one of the accusers of Christ at the assembly of all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes, said: "I have heard him [Christ] say, I will destroy this temple made by hands and within three days I will build another not made by hands (*acheiropoietos*)"<sup>4</sup> The Apostle Paul also uses this term in another connection.<sup>5</sup>

The Church has a special service on August 16, honoring this icon with beautiful hymns that mention its history. The Apolytikion chanted on that day is the same one that is chanted on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, when the great victory of the Church over the heresy of Iconoclasm is celebrated. It begins with these words:

We venerate Thine immaculate icon,  
O Christ our good God,  
entreating Thee to forgive our transgressions....

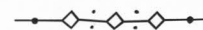
<sup>1</sup> Saint Nectarios, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>4</sup> 14:58.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:1; Colossians 2:11.



### The Holy Tile

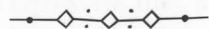
About the icon called The Holy Tile, which also shows the face of our Lord, Church tradition says the following. The bishop of Edessa, where the original Holy Napkin was sent by Christ, concealed the Napkin in a niche of the wall over the gate of that city. He did this in order to protect it from the impious grandson of Abgar, the King who had been healed by venerating it. This grandson planned to remove it and put in its place an idol. In the year 544 or 545, Eulalios, the Bishop of Edessa at that time, saw a dream which revealed the place of the niche where the Holy Napkin was hidden. Following the revelation, he went and found the icon intact. He also found an *exact likeness* of it imprinted on the inner side of the tile that had been placed to conceal it.<sup>1</sup>

This icon, as painted, is a replica of the Holy Napkin, except for two things: (a) It has the inscription: Τὸ Ἅγιον Κεράμιον ("The Holy Tile"), and (b) it is painted on what looks like a tile, instead of cloth. In domed churches, it is painted at the middle of the western side of the base of the drum of the dome, directly opposite the Holy Napkin, which is on the eastern side of the drum.<sup>2</sup> This gives it, appropriately, less prominence than is given to the Holy Napkin. In domeless churches it is omitted, for lack of a suitable place for it—one that conveys the idea that it is a *copy* of the Holy Napkin.

<sup>1</sup> Leonid Ouspensky, *Theology of The Icon*, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Dionysios of Fournia, *Hermeneia tes Zographikés Téchnes* ("Explanation of the Art of Painting"), Petroupolis (Petrograd), 1909, p. 215; Kontoglou, *Ekphrasis*, Vol. I, p. 122.





### *Christ Pantocrator Panel Icon*

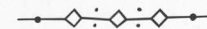
In the representation of Christ as Pantocrator in the *dome*, which is amply discussed in Volume One, the Book of the Gospels is shown closed. This is done for a good reason, namely, that in a tall, Byzantine type church, the great distance between the Pantocrator, at the uppermost part of the dome, and the beholder below renders any writing in the Book illegible and hence non-functional. But in the case of Christ Pantocrator on the iconostasis, which can be approached by the faithful, the writing in the Book, if large enough and *not* like that on the page of a printed book (as in naturalistic paintings), can easily be read. Therefore, it is best in the panel icon of Christ Pantocrator to paint the Book of the Gospels *open*, and to write in large capital letters on the left and right page some appropriate edifying statement taken from the Gospels.

Examples of such statements are the following: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you" (Matthew 25:34); "Love one another, as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

The icon has the inscription:  $\text{IC XC}$ , written at the upper left and upper right hand corners, respectively, and  $\text{ΠΑΝΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ}$ , written below, near the shoulders, divided into two parts.

Its archetype is of a very early date. The essential traits are discernible in a fresco that was done in the fourth century on the ceiling of the Catacomb of Commodilla in Rome. Christ is depicted from the waist up. His hair is luxuriant, long, and falls over the shoulders. He has a mustache and beard, large, peaceful, attentive eyes. His face possesses hieratic, spiritual beauty. Around His head is a halo. His chest and arms are covered with a garment similar in form to that seen in traditional icons of the Pantocrator, and as in them leaves the uppermost part of the chest exposed. This painting has the inscription  $\text{A}$  on one side of

the halo, and  $\text{Ω}$  on the other side, taken from the Book of the Apocalypse, where Christ says: "I am the Alpha and the Omega" (1:8).



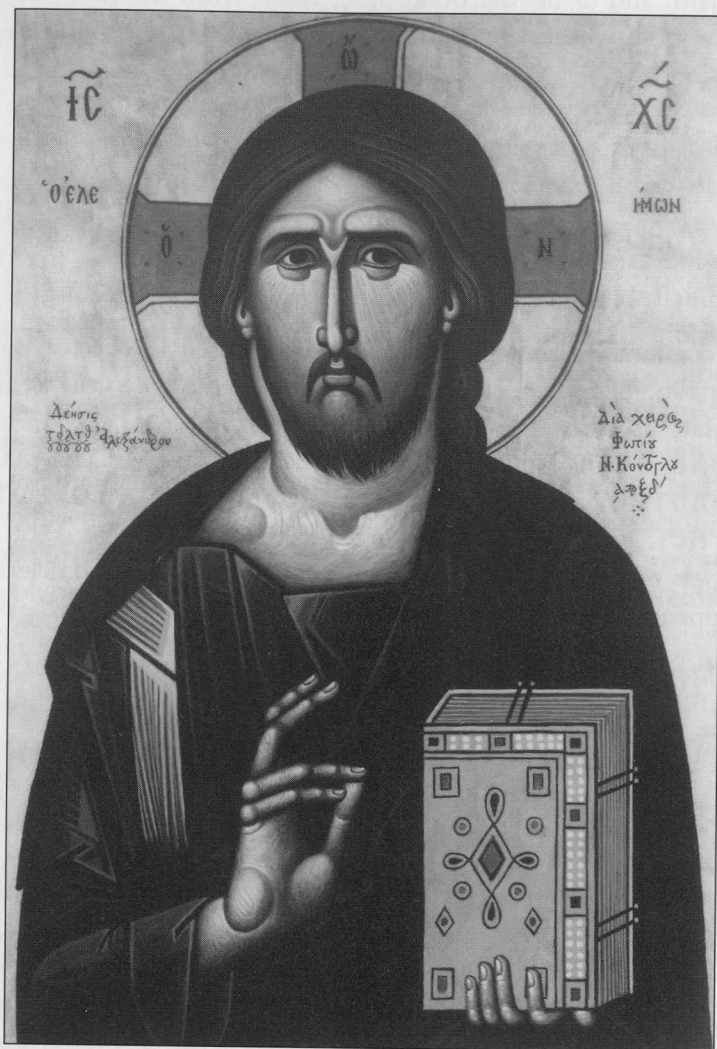
### *Panel Icons of Christ the Merciful, the Lifegiver, and the Lightgiver*

Occasionally, in place of the icon of Christ Pantocrator, some other type of representation of Him is placed next to the Beautiful Gate as a Sovereign icon, such as Jesus Christ the Merciful ( $\text{IC XC, } \text{ὁ ἐλεήμων}$ ), Jesus Christ the Lifegiver ( $\text{IC XC, } \text{ὁ ζωοδότης}$ ), or Jesus Christ the Lightgiver ( $\text{IC XC, } \text{ὁ φωτοδότης}$ ). It is proper in such icons to show the Book of the Gospels *open* and to have written in it with large capital letters an appropriate statement made by Christ. Thus, in *Christ the Merciful* a suitable statement would be: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Matthew 9:13); "His Mercy is on them that fear Him" (Luke 1:50).

In the icon of *Christ the Lifegiver*, particularly appropriate and edifying sayings are: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25); "The bread of God is He which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John 6:48).

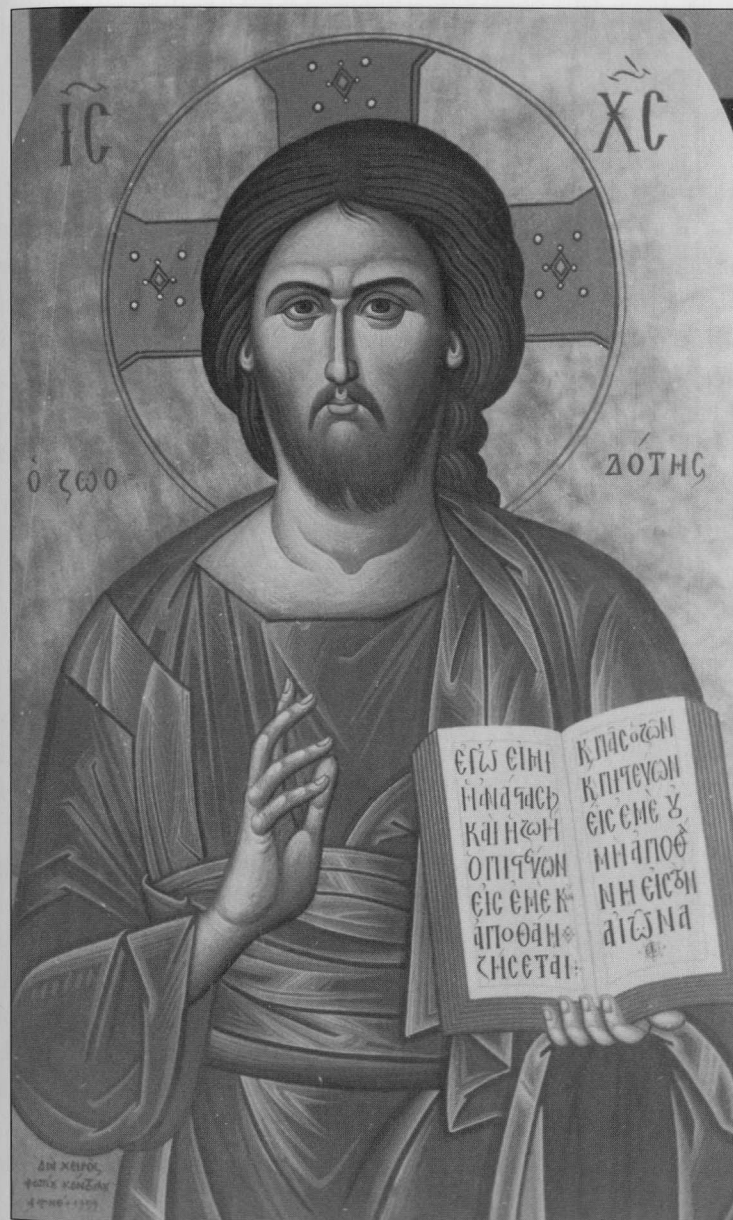
For the Icon of *Christ the Lightgiver*, particularly suitable verses are these: "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12); and "The true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9).

Christ is called the Merciful, the Lifegiver, and the Lightgiver not only in the iconography, but also in the hymnography of the Orthodox Church. Thus, He is addressed as "Lightgiver" in the Exaposteilarion that is chanted at the evening service of Palm Sunday:



CHRIST THE MERCIFUL

*Panel icon by Photios Kontoglou. Holy Transfiguration Monastery. 1964.*



CHRIST THE LIFEGIVER

*Panel icon by Photios Kontoglou. 1959.*

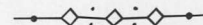


CHRIST THE LIGHTGIVER

Panel icon by Photios Kontoglou. Holy Transfiguration Monastery. 1959.

I see Thy Bridal chamber adorned,  
O my Savior, and I have no wedding garment  
that I may enter therein; O Lightgiver, make  
radiant the vesture of my soul and save me.

Sometimes, the panel icons depicting Christ Pantocrator, Christ the Merciful, Christ the Lifegiver, and Christ the Lightgiver are without any saying, the Book of the Gospels being shown closed. This is not desirable, as the icon thereby fails to tell the beholder why it bears the particular inscription that it bears. A well chosen saying of Christ constitutes an explanation, and thus instructs the beholder about Christ's particular attribute.



### *Christ as the Ancient of Days*

The Byzantine icon of Christ as "the Ancient of Days" is inspired by a passage in the book of the Prophet Daniel that foretells the Incarnation of the Divine Logos, the second Person of the Holy Trinity. The passage is as follows:

"I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, Whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame and its wheels as burning fire. . . . I saw in the night visions, and, behold one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before Him. . . . And the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the Saints of the Most High" (Daniel 7:9, 13, 22).

Saint John Chrysostom,<sup>1</sup> Saint Athanasios the Great,<sup>2</sup> Saint Cyril of Alexandria,<sup>3</sup> and other holy Church Fathers identify the

<sup>1</sup> Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 56, col. 389A.

<sup>2</sup> *Bibliothèque ton Hellénon Patéron kai Ekklesiastikón Syngraphaíon* ("Library of the Greek Fathers and Ecclesiastical Writers"), Vol. 36,45.29

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. 39,278.6.



"Ancient of Days" with Jesus Christ. For considered in His *Divine* nature, which is beginningless, Christ may be called "Ancient." But as *He took on the form of man*, becoming incarnate, He may rightly be depicted as man.

This view is often expressed in the hymnography of the Church in vivid form. Thus one of the hymns that is chanted at the Orthros of the feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple begins with this verse:

For my sake, the Ancient of Days became a child . . . .

Another hymn, which is chanted during the Vespers of the same festival says:

The Ancient of days, having become a child according to the flesh, is brought to the temple by the Virgin Mother, fulfilling the promise of the Scriptures. . . .

And another hymn, which is chanted at the Vesper Service of the next day, says:

Today the Ancient of Days is paradoxically seen as a child according to the flesh, and is brought into the temple.

The Byzantine icon of Christ as the Ancient of Days represents Him as an old man with white hair and white beard. His head is surrounded by a round halo with a cross inscribed in it—something reserved only for depictions of Christ. His facial features and expression resemble somewhat those of the familiar Byzantine Pantocrator. However, the face is thinner, the cheeks somewhat sunken, the hair white, the beard white and longer, and the garments of light colors. The body is shown from the waist up, as in the icon of the Pantocrator in the dome, and like Him, He blesses with His right hand. The Pantocrator always holds in His left hand the Book of the Gospels, whereas in the case of the Ancient of Days it is not always so: sometimes He holds the Book of the Gospels, and at others one or two scrolls. The single scroll may be taken to represent the Book of the Gospels; the two scrolls, the Old Testament and the Gospels.



CHRIST AS THE ANCIENT OF DAYS  
Detail of a Déesis fresco. Kastoriá. Tenth or eleventh century.



CHRIST AS THE ANCIENT OF DAYS  
*Fresco. Kastoriá. Twelfth century.*



CHRIST AS THE ANCIENT OF DAYS  
*Wall painting. Georgia. Fourteenth century.*

The inscription of the Byzantine icons of the Ancient of Days is: Ἰῆς Χρ, ὁ Παλαιὸς ἡμέρων ("Jesus Christ, the Ancient of Days").

This representation of Jesus Christ has not been given prominence in churches in Byzantine and post-Byzantine times. Little use of it has been made and it has not been painted in the main part of the church, but either in the Holy Bema or in the narthex. In Byzantine churches which have used this theme, the place chosen for depicting it has been the wall above the Prothesis or the secondary dome of the same part of the church.

Kalokyris places the date of one of the earliest depictions of the Ancient of Days in the closing years of the twelfth century. "One of the earliest representations of the Ancient of Days," he says, "is in the crypt of the side chapel of Saint Vlasios, near Brindisi (Italy). It dates from 1197."<sup>1</sup> Of the same century, he adds, is the miniature in the codex of homilies by the monk Iakovos Kokkinovaphos which is in the National Library of Paris.

In the fresco of the side chapel at Brindisi, notes Kalokyris, the Ancient of Days is shown surrounded by the symbols of the four Evangelists. The depiction of these shows that in his mind the iconographer clearly identified the Ancient of Days with Christ, for the Evangelists were those who put down in writing *His* Gospel. In the description of the iconographic decoration of the central dome, we noted that the four Evangelists (Matthew, John, Mark, and Luke) are portrayed on the four pendentives of the central dome, sometimes with their symbols (a man, an eagle, a lion, a calf), while at the uppermost part of the dome is painted the figure of Christ Pantocrator.

The icon at Brindisi mentioned by Kalokyris, and dated from 1197, is not the earliest known representation of the Ancient of Days. At Kastoria, in northern Greece, where there are many Byzantine churches decorated with frescoes, there is a wall

painting which depicts the Ancient of Days that dates from the eleventh century. Another such fresco there is a work of the twelfth century. In the first, Christ, in bust, is represented in a small Déesis. He blesses with His right hand and holds an open Book of the Gospels in the other. In the second wall painting Christ, likewise in bust, is shown surrounded by an ornamental circle, as is the figure of the Pantocrator in the main dome of churches. Here, instead of a book, He is shown holding a scroll in His left hand. In both murals the halo has a cross inscribed in it, and in both the inscription bears the name of Jesus Christ: Ἰῆς Χρ, ὁ Παλαιὸς ἡμέρων.

In Georgia (in the Caucasus), there is a wall painting that dates from the first half of the fourteenth century. The head of the Ancient of Days here is similarly surrounded by a halo with a cross in it. The inscription is partly in the Greek language (Ἰῆς Χρ) and partly in the Georgian.

In post-Byzantine times, the "Ancient of Days" has been erroneously identified with God the Father—the First Person of the Holy Trinity. We see this identification both in certain icons that have been painted during that period and in writings on iconography, such as the *Explanation of the Art of Painting* by Dionysios of Fourni.<sup>1</sup> In these icons, the inscription used is: ὁ Ἀναρχὸς Πατήρ, ὁ Παλαιὸς ἡμέρων ("The Beginningless Father, the Ancient of Days"). For this reason, the depiction of the Ancient of Days is likely to arouse disagreements among parishioners whether Christ or God the Father is represented in this figure. Even some iconographers are likely to insist that the Ancient of Days represents God the Father and that it is a mistake to inscribe Jesus Christ on it.

In order to avoid such disagreements and contentions, it is best not to make use of "The Ancient of Days" figure in decorating a church. Another reason for such avoidance is the fact that the figure of Christ as an old man with white hair, white beard,

<sup>1</sup> *Threskeutiké kai Ethiké Enkyklopaideia* ("Religious and Ethical Encyclopedia"), Athens, Vol. 9, 1966, col. 1089.

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 224, 227.



sunken cheeks, etc., is not reminiscent of the familiar Byzantine archetype of Christ, and does not serve to teach the meaning of the vision of Prophet Daniel.

The art of iconography is manifestly not adapted to give an unambiguous and edifying expression to Daniel's prophetic vision of the Incarnation. Hymnography, on the other hand, has shown itself eminently successful in giving a clear, vivid, instructive, and uplifting explanation of it, judging from the above quoted hymns, and from others that are scattered in the liturgical books of the Orthodox Church.



### *Christ as the Great High Priest*

The figure of Christ dressed in episcopal vestments and mitred, is sometimes seen on the iconostasis instead of Christ Pantocrator or any of the three other icons described earlier. This portrayal of Him finds its justification in statements made by Saint Paul in his letter to the Hebrews. Christ is called here "a merciful and faithful high priest," a "great high priest, that is passed into the heavens," "an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedek," and "an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (2:17, 4:14, 6:20, 8:1).

This icon has the inscription: ἸϞ ΧϞ, Ὁ ΜΕΓΑΣ ΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΥΣ ("Jesus Christ the Great High Priest"). Sometimes it has the additional inscription: Ὁ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΟΝΤΩΝ ("The King of Kings"). This is taken from the First Epistle to Timothy, where the Apostle Paul says: "Our Lord Jesus Christ... is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (I Timothy 6:14-15). The first inscription appears on the right side of the icon; the second, on the opposite side.

On the left page of the Book of the Gospels which He holds is written Christ's statement: "My kingdom is not of this world"



CHRIST AS THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST

*Panel icon. Crete, Fifteenth century.*

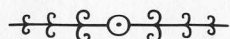
(John 18:36); on the right page, some other appropriate saying of Jesus, such as: "Take, eat; this is My body" (Matthew 26:26).

The panel icon of Christ as a High Priest with the latter saying is related to the mural in the eastern apse that depicts the Divine Liturgy with Christ officiating in episcopal vestments, and to that of the Communion of the Apostles below it, where Christ is offering the holy Chalice and the holy Bread to His disciples.

In recent times, the icon of Christ as High Priest has also been placed on the back panel of the Bishop's throne.

All the panel icons of Christ that have been discussed above have the same inscription at the upper part:  $\tilde{\Gamma}\tilde{\Sigma}$  at the upper left hand corner, and  $\tilde{\chi}\tilde{\Sigma}$  at the upper right hand corner. Below, near the shoulders, is written in smaller capitals the particular title of each one, divided into two parts, thus:

$\tilde{\omicron}$ ΠΑΝΤΟ	ΚΡΑΤΩΡ
$\tilde{\omicron}$ ΕΛΕ	ΗΜΩΝ
$\tilde{\omicron}$ ΖΩΟ	ΔΟΤΗΣ
$\tilde{\omicron}$ ΦΩΤΟ	ΔΟΤΗΣ
$\tilde{\omicron}$ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΤΩΝ	ΚΑΙ ΜΕΓΑΣ
ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΟΝΤΩΝ	ΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΥΣ



### Other Icons of Christ

Besides the depictions of Christ which have already been discussed, there are several others that are rare, namely, "Christ as The Reclining Child;" "Christ at the Age of Twelve Teaching in the Temple;" "Christ as Emmanuel;" and "Christ in Another Form." All of them are related to some statement in Holy Scripture and seek to illustrate it.



### Christ as an Infant

Christ is shown as an infant chiefly in icons of the All-Holy Virgin Mary, the Theotokos. He is depicted held by her on her lap. In such icons, He blesses with His right hand and holds a scroll in His left hand, symbolizing the Gospel, the "Good News" which He brought to mankind. In the icon of the Platyτέρα, in the conch of the main eastern apse of the church, He is sometimes shown blessing with both hands.

A few other instances where Christ is depicted as a Child are chiefly the following icons already described in Volume One: *The Nativity of Christ*, *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, and *The Lamb and Son of God*; and one about to be described, called *The Reclining Child*. In the Nativity scene, the infant is shown lying in the manger that is inside a cave;<sup>1</sup> in The Presentation in the Temple, He is shown being presented by the Theotokos to the Righteous Symeon;<sup>2</sup> and as The Lamb and Son of God, He is painted in the central apse of the Holy Bema with hierarchs on either side.<sup>3</sup>



### Christ as The Reclining Child

Christ as The Reclining Child ( $\tilde{\omicron}$  ΑΝΑΠΕΤΩΝ) is inspired by the verse in Genesis: "Having couched, Thou didst sleep as a lion" (49:9—Septuagint). The words are from a prophecy of Jacob. Christ is shown here stretched out, reclining on a mattress, with His head resting on the right hand.

In some old churches, such as that of the Protaton at Mount Athos, the type of the Child Christ called "The Reclining One" is

<sup>1</sup> See Volume One of this work, pp. 135, 138.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114-116.



CHRIST AS THE RECLINING CHILD  
Fresco. Church of the Protaton (Athos). Fourteenth century.

## GOD IN ICONOGRAPHY

painted over the central doorway of the western end of the church, on the interior side of the wall; in others, in the conch of the diaconicón. The Child is shown facing forward with eyes open, the right hand resting on His right cheek and the left arm on the left thigh and knee. Sometimes He is shown flanked on either side by an Angel in an attitude of prayer.

This icon has the inscription: Ὁ ἈΝΑΠΕΓΩΝ ("The Reclining One"). Near the upper part of the mattress, on either side, is written, "Jesus Christ": Ἰῆς Ὡς.

The best known example of this representation of Christ is the fresco by the hand of Manuel Panselinos in the Church of the Protaton at the Holy Mountain of Athos.



### *Christ at the Age of Twelve in the Temple*

In this icon Christ is represented as a beardless youth seated on a throne. He is flanked by four bearded elders, two on His right side and two on His left. They are seated on a semicircular bench and are looking at Christ with amazement. Behind Him and the tall back side of the bench stand the Theotokos on His right side, and the righteous Joseph on His left side. They are shown from the waist up. On either side of them stand two bearded elders. Like the other elders, they look at Jesus astonished. Christ blesses with His right hand and holds a scroll in the left. He, the Theotokos, and Joseph are depicted with halos.

The icon has the inscription: Ὁ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΔΩΔΕΚΑ ἔτων ἐν τῷ ναῷ ("Christ at the Age of Twelve in the Temple").

This scene is based on the following passage in the Gospel according to Luke:

And when He (Jesus) was twelve years old, they (Mary and Joseph) went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast (of the passover). And when they had fulfilled the days, as they





CHRIST AT THE AGE OF TWELVE IN THE TEMPLE  
Fresco. Monastery of Lavra (Athos). Sixteenth century.

returned, the Child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and His mother Mary knew not of it. . . . And when they found Him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them and asking questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers (2:42-43, 45-47).

An excellent wall painting depicting this event is to be seen in the *katholikón* of the Monastery of Lavra on the Holy Mountain. It was done in the sixteenth century by the hand of the famous iconographer Theophanes the Cretan.



### *Christ as Emmanuel*

The portrayal of Christ as Emmanuel is inspired by the following statement in the Gospel according to Matthew: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (1:23).

Christ as Emmanuel is represented as a beardless youth. Sometimes He is seen depicted in the small dome of the diaconicón of the Holy Bema, surrounded by Prophets. On a scroll which He holds is written the following verse contained in the Gospel according to Luke: "The Spirit of God is upon Me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor" (4:18). Sometimes He is shown holding with His left hand an open Book of the Gospels with some statement that identifies Him as Christ, or a closed.

The hymnography of the Church sometimes makes mention of Christ as Emmanuel. Thus, one of the hymns that is chanted at the Vespers of Saturday of the First Mode of Byzantine chant, contained in the *Parakletiké*, says in part:

Behold, Emmanuel hath nailed our sins onto the Cross, and by giving life hath mortified death, having as a lover of mankind resurrected Adam.

The icon has the inscription: ἸϞ ΧϞ ("Jesus Christ") written at the upper part, and further down: Ὁ ΕΜΜΑΝΟΥΗΛ ("Emmanuel").

This type of Christ is seen in the katholika of Docheiariou, Lavra, Koutloumousiou, and other monasteries of Mount Athos, as well as elsewhere.



### *Christ as the Messenger of Great Counsel*

"Christ as the Messenger of Great Counsel" is shown as a youth with outstretched wings, blessing with His right hand and holding a scroll in the left. This icon is based on a prophecy of Isaiah and on certain statements in the New Testament, especially in the Gospel according to John. Prophesying the Incarnation of the Divine Logos, Christ, and His bringing the "Good Message"—which is what the Greek word *Evangelion* means (translated as "Gospel"), Isaiah says: "A Child was born unto us, a Son, and was given unto us. His government is upon His shoulder, and His name is Messenger of Great Counsel, Great Counselor, wonderful mighty God, Ruler, Prince of peace, Father of the future age" (9:6—Septuagint).

The Greek word in the Septuagint that I rendered "Messenger" is *Angelos*. This word is used in Holy Scripture sometimes to denote a *human* being who acts as a messenger, and sometimes to denote an *Angel*, an incorporeal rational creature that serves God especially by bearing messages to human beings. In which sense the word *Angelos* is employed has to be determined by the context in which it appears. The verb form of this term, *anangélein*, which means "to bring a message," "to announce," is used in the



CHRIST AS EMMANUEL  
*Koutloumousiou Monastery (Athos). Sixteenth century.*



CHRIST AS THE MESSENGER OF GREAT COUNSEL  
Fresco. Skete of Kafsokalyvia (Athos). Seventeenth century.

Gospel according to John in speaking of Jesus. Thus, the Samaritan woman whom Jesus met at Jacob's well said to Him: "I know that the Messiah cometh, Which is called Christ: when He is come, He will announce (*anangeleí*) us all things" (4:25). (The meaning of *anangeleí*, "will announce" or "will annunciate," is lost in English-language versions of the New Testament. Thus, in the King James Version *anangeleí* is translated "will tell," while in the Revised Standard Version it is rendered "will show".)

Another important relevant passage in the same Gospel is the following: "These things have I (Christ) spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I will announce (*anangeló*) plainly of the Father" (16:25).

The passage in Isaiah where this great Prophet speaks of the "Messenger of Great Counsel" is interpreted by Saint Maximos the Confessor as follows: "The Great Counsel (*Boulé*) of God the Father is the silent and unknown Mystery of the Dispensation (*Oikonomia*). This was revealed by the Only-begotten Son, Who fulfilled it by the Incarnation, becoming the Messenger (*Angelos*) of the Great and pre-eternal Counsel of God the Father."<sup>1</sup> Saint Athanasios the Great, referring more briefly than Maximos to the passage in Isaiah, interprets like him the term "Counsel" (*Boulé*) as being the Will (*Thélema*) of God the Father, and says that Christ *executed* (*epoíese*) it.<sup>2</sup> The same interpretation of the Prophet's statement is given by Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Cyril of Alexandria, and other Greek Church Fathers.

The term "Counsel" (which I have used in translating the Greek word *Boulé*) is to be taken in the sense, not of advice, but of "plan of action."

Christ in the form of "The Messenger of Great Counsel" is sometimes painted in the dome of the diaconicon, instead of

<sup>1</sup> B' Hekatontás ton Theologikón, kb' ("Second Century on Theology," Chapter 22.)

Cf. *The Philokalia*, Vol. II, London and Boston, 1981, pp. 142-143, par. 22, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 27, col. 101B.



Christ as Emmanuel. He is occasionally painted here escorted by four Angels. On the scroll, or Book of the Gospels, which He holds is written: "I came out of God and am present. I did not come of Myself, but He sent Me."

Many hymns of the Church speak of Christ as Messenger of Great Counsel. Particularly eloquent and didactic is one of the Katabasiai which are chanted from November 21 to December 25, Christmas. The first of these Katabasiai begins with these words: "Christ is born, glorify Him." The fourth Katabasia says:

Being God of peace, a Father of compassion, Thou didst send unto us the Messenger of Thy Great Counsel, granting us peace. Hence we, having been led towards the light of knowledge of God, rose very early in the morning, and glorify Thee, O lover of mankind.

The fact that Christ is depicted with wings—the way Angels are represented—does not mean that Christ is viewed here as an Angel. For Christ is Creator, whereas Angels are creatures. The wings are simply a symbolic way of expressing Christ's *ready obedience* to God the Father (cf. Philippians, 2:8).

The inscription of this icon is:  $\text{IC XC}$  ("Jesus Christ") written at the upper part of the icon, and  $\text{O MEΓΑΛΗΣ ΒΟΥΛΗΣ ἌΓΓΕΛΟΣ}$  ("The Messenger of Great Counsel") written below.



### *Christ in Another Form*

This is the rarest depiction of Christ. In it Christ is represented as a young adult, younger than Christ as Pantocrator. He is shown with a mustache and beard, but with hair that on the sides goes down only as far as the ears. He wears a tunic and a mantle, and blesses. His face does not resemble that of Christ Pantocrator, the Merciful, the Lifegiver, or the Lightgiver, or the adult Christ of the Dodekáorton.

"Christ in Another Form" is based on the statements in the

Gospels according to Mark and Luke that after His Resurrection Jesus appeared to two of His disciples. Mark says that He *appeared* "in another form" (16:12), but does not name the disciples. Luke says that following His Resurrection Christ appeared to him and to Cleopas at Emmaus, describes the circumstances of this meeting, and notes that he and Cleopas did not recognize Jesus until "He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave it them." It was then that "their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him" (24:30-31).

"Christ in Another Form" has been done in fresco on a wall of the Holy Bema of a few churches. The best known example of this icon is a mural that was painted in the fourteenth century by Manuel Panselinos in the Church of the Protaton on the Holy Mountain.

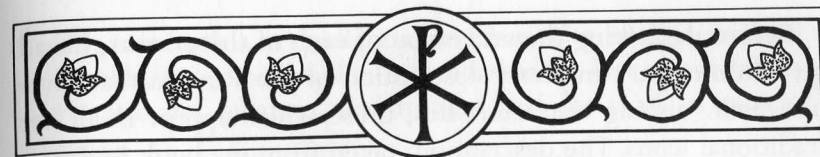
The inscription is:  $\text{IC XC, O EN ETÉRA MORΦH}$  ("Jesus Christ in Another Form").

This representation of Christ has found very little use in Orthodox iconography, because it tends to perplex rather than edify. Without the inscription, the figure of Christ here cannot be identified with the archetype of the adult Christ. And even with the inscription, the beholder would be puzzled by it, unless he knew the already quoted passage about Emmaus—a passage that is very seldom discussed or simply mentioned. It should be noted that although the Evangelist Mark says that Jesus "appeared in another form," he does not give any explanation concerning the character of the other form. To depict Him with hair that goes down only as far as the ears is obviously arbitrary and unwarrantable, as would be any other fanciful variation of His archetypal face. As I point out in my discussion of the icon of Christ at Emmaus, "the other form" should be viewed as a subjective, not an objective phenomenon. This is the way it has been understood by traditional iconography, as is evidenced by the fact that the form of Christ in the icon "Christ Breaking the Bread at Emmaus" is the form of the established archetype of the adult Christ—not a novel one.



PANAGIA THE HODEGETRIA

Panel icon by Photios Kontoglou. Holy Transfiguration Monastery. 1961.



### CHAPTER III

## THE THEOTOKOS

**T**HE ALL-HOLY VIRGIN MARY, the Panagia or Theotokos, is depicted in monumental proportions—in mosaic or wall painting—in the eastern apse of the church, in the type called *Platyτέρα*. She is also painted in half of the icons of the *Dodekáorton* and in other scenes—murals and panels—in the Small and Great *Déesis*, and holding the Child Christ on a large panel icon that is placed near the Beautiful Gate. The Theotokos as *Platyτέρα* has been described in Volume One. Depiction of her in icons of the *Dodekáorton* has also been explained there, in the sections on the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, the Crucifixion, the Ascension, and the Dormition. So also has been the portrayal of her in the *Déesis*. In the present volume, two other important compositions in which she is shown have already been described: the Nativity of the Theotokos and the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple.

There remain to be described the following important types of the All-Holy Virgin, which are executed on panels that are placed on the iconostasis near the Beautiful Gate or on *proskynetária*: Panagia the *Hodegéttria*, Panagia the *Glykophiloussa*, Panagia the *Eleoúsa*, Panagia of the Passion, Panagia of the Angels, and Panagia the Fount of Life.

Before describing the archetype of each of these icons, I shall give Kontoglou's masterly description of the Panagia that gives her distinguishing characteristics, those which appear in all her traditional icons. The description, taken from my book *Byzantine Sacred Art*, is as follows:

The beauty of the All-Holy Virgin is not carnal, but spiritual. Carnal beauty evokes carnal excitation, whereas spiritual beauty evokes contrition, reverence, and genuine love. Spiritual beauty is possessed by the All-Holy Virgin, and this beauty is stamped upon the Orthodox icons of her made by pious men who fasted, psalmodized, and lived in a state of contrition and spiritual purity. They have impressed on her aspect the mystical beauty that attracts pious souls like a magnet, and quiets and consoles them. . . .

In these icons her head is covered modestly and gravely with her Maphóron, a broad and hieratic dress of a deep wine-red color, which falls over her shoulders and leaves only her long face and her hands exposed. Visible beneath this covering is a narrow band, which binds her forehead and leaves only the tips of her ears uncovered.

Her forehead is dark ivory, pure, simple, and absolutely clear. Her eyebrows are arched, lively, and long and narrow. Her eyes are almond shaped, brown, deep, serious yet very sweet, with their whites clear but shaded. Her gaze is melancholy, simple, straight, quiet, sympathetic, lovable, sorrowful but at the same time gladdening, stern but at the same time compassionate, most saintly, spiritual, innocent, meditative, blameless, hope-inspiring, patient, meek, most modest, far from every kind of carnal thought, human but divine, guileless, sisterly, noble, reproving, wakeful, serene, benevolent, motherly, chaste, cool, scorching to all those who have evil thoughts, tender, piercing, searching, unfeigned, princely, entreating, immovable. Her nose is long and narrow, Judaic, lean, with thin nostrils, a little curved, modest. Her mouth is small, shy, prudent, closed, pure, shaded near the cheeks as if she were slightly smiling. Her chin is curved, reverent, unaffected, humble. Her cheeks are chaste, pure, smooth, fragrant,

shy, pale with a very slightly rosy hue. Her neck is inclined humbly, and joins the chin in a soft shadow. Her whole face is hieratic and religious, and testifies that she is of an ancient race.

Her immaculate hands are small and narrow, with long fingers and narrow nails. Her left hand holds Christ, and her right hand rests modestly on her chest, in a pose of entreaty, the thumb far out from the other fingers. In the more ancient icons the right hand is arranged in a more vertical position, higher up, near the neck.<sup>1</sup>



### *Panagia the Hodegéttria*

The most solemn form of the Panagia is that of the *Hodegéttria* or "Guide." It is also the oldest, being attributed by the tradition of the Orthodox Church to the Evangelist Luke. In this icon her head is upright, her expression austere, her whole form more hieratic than in the other types of icon which depict her. The same is true of the Child Christ, Whom she holds on her lap.

Konstantinos Kalokyris gives the following description:

According to this type, the Theotokos is represented upright, holding the Child and slightly turned to the left. She holds Christ with her left hand, and has her right hand lifted before her chest. The faces of the Mother and the Child do not touch each other. The Mother of God is usually shown from the waist up, and has a sublime expression. This type signifies the Panagia of victory and glory.<sup>2</sup>

In the liturgical tradition of the Church, in particular in the Great and the Small Supplicatory Canons to the Theotokos, the

<sup>1</sup> *Byzantine Sacred Art*, 1985, 1992, pp. 107, 110.

<sup>2</sup> Konstantinos D. Kalokyris, *He Theotókos eis ten Eikonographían*, ("The Theotokos in Iconography"), Thessaloniki, 1972, pp. 60-61.



first icon of the Theotokos as Hodegéttria is attributed to the Evangelist Luke in the following Megalynarion:

Speechless be the lips of the impious who refuse to venerate thy revered icon which hath been painted by the most holy Luke, the Apostle, and is called the Hodegéttria.

The type of icon called Panagia Hodegéttria has been the most widely used one in Orthodox churches through the ages. And a great number of icons of this type are in the possession of museums.

The inscription of this icon at the upper part is: ΜΡ ΘΥ and below: Η ΟΔΗΓΗΤΡΙΑ ("Mother of God, the Guide"). It should be noted that although in this, and the other icons of the Theotokos described in this chapter, the abbreviation ΜΡ ΘΥ ("Mother of God") appears, in traditional Greek usage these icons are referred to as those of the Panagia: ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑ Η ΟΔΗΓΗΤΡΙΑ, ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑ Η ΕΛΕΟΥΣΑ, ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑ Η ΓΛΥΚΟΦΙΛΟΥΣΑ, and so on. Panagia means "All-Holy" Mother. (See p. 100)



### *Panagia the Eleoúsa*

The icon called Panagia the Eleoúsa, or the Panagia of Compassion, is closely related to the icon Panagia the Glykophiloussa which will be described next. In both there is a contact of the face of the Mother with that of the Child; in both, her head is inclined affectionately towards the Child; and there is an expression of affection of the Child for her. The two icons differ only in that in the Glykophiloussa icon the Child brings His right hand to the jaw of the Theotokos, whereas in the icon of the Eleoúsa there is no such gesture. However, in inscribing these icons, iconographers often improperly name Panagia the Glykophiloussa Panagia the Eleoúsa, and vice versa.<sup>1</sup> Also, sometimes these icons

<sup>1</sup> Kalokyris, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.



PANAGIA THE ELEOUSA

*The Virgin of Vladimir. Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Twelfth century.*

are given certain characteristics that are proper for Panagia the Hodegéttria, such as showing the Theotokos with one of her hands raised up before her chest gesturing towards the Child.

The best known icon of the type called Eleoúsa is that usually referred to as "The Virgin of Vladimir," a work done in Constantinople for a Russian patron about 1125 and now kept at the Tretyakov Gallery of Moscow. In Russian this type is called the "Umilenie."

The Eleoúsa type is regarded as older than that of the Glykophilóusa, and as probably dating from the early centuries of the Christian era.<sup>1</sup>

The inscription of this icon is ΜΡ ΘΥ Η ΕΛΕΟΥΣΑ ("Mother of God the Eleoúsa").



### *Panagia the Glykophilóusa*

The term "Glykophilóusa" is untranslatable by a single English word. It is a compound term, made up of *glykó*, which means "sweet," and *philóusa*, the participial form of *phileín*, which means "to love" and also "to kiss." The term is best translated by the phrase "The Sweetly Loving." This rendering is in accordance with the Gospel usage of the word *phileín* as "to love". Thus, Christ, in addressing the Apostle Peter, uses the term *phileín* in that sense. He asks: "Simon Peter, son of Jonas, lovest (*phileís*) thou me?" (John 4:15-17). "Glykophilóusa" has sometimes been translated: "The Sweetly Kissing." However, in icons bearing this inscription the Panagia is never shown kissing the Child, but only as particularly affectionate. She holds the Child Christ on her left side with both hands, leaning her head towards Him, so that their faces are in contact. With His right hand, the Child touches

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*



PANAGIA THE GLYKOPHILOUSA

*Philotheou Monastery (Athos). Reputed to date from the eighth century.*





PANAGIA THE GLYKOPHILOUSA  
Byzantine Museum, Athens. Sixteenth century.

the left jaw of the Mother, while in His left hand He holds a scroll.

When the icon is not intended for the iconostasis, but for a proskynetáron, the Theotokos may be shown holding the Child on her right side. (The same can be said of the icon of Panagia the Eleoúsa.)

This icon originated in the Byzantine era and has been used during the post-Byzantine period down to the present. A Panagia Glykophiloúsa icon believed to date from the eighth century is treasured in the main church of the Monastery of Philotheou on Mount Athos, set on a large, upright proskynetáron.

The inscription of the icons of this type is:  $\tilde{M}\tilde{P}\ \tilde{\Theta}\tilde{\nu}\ \tilde{H}\ \Gamma\tilde{\Lambda}\tilde{\nu}\tilde{\kappa}\tilde{o}\cdot\ \Phi\tilde{\iota}\tilde{\lambda}\tilde{o}\tilde{\upsilon}\tilde{\varsigma}\tilde{\alpha}$  ("Mother of God, Panagia the Sweetly Loving").



### *Panagia of the Passion*

This type of the Panagia, too, goes back to the Byzantine period. It combines characteristics of the Hodegéttria and the Eleoúsa, and has the special characteristic of depicting at each of the upper corners an Angel with the symbols of the Passion. The oldest known icon of this type is in Cyprus, at the Monastery of Arakou. It is a fresco which dates from 1193. The best known example of this type is an icon painted by Andreas Ritsos in the fifteenth century after the Fall of Constantinople.

In this icon, the Theotokos holds the Child Christ on her left side, with her head slightly inclined towards Him. She supports His body with her left hand and holds with her other hand the left hand of the Child, her fingers pointing at Him. The Child has His head turned back, looking at the Angel who holds in his right hand a cross. The expression of both is solemn. At the left cor-

<sup>1</sup> Xyngopoulos, *Skediasma tes Threskeutikés Zographikés Metá ten Hálosin*, Athens, 1957, pp. 187-190.

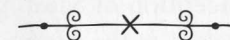




PANAGIA OF THE PASSION  
Panel icon by Andreas Ritzos. Fifteenth century.

ner, over the shoulder of the Panagia, an Angel holds the other symbols of the Passion: the spear and the sponge.<sup>1</sup>

The inscription of this icon is: ΜΡ ΘΥ Η ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΘΟΥΣ ("Mother of God, Panagia of the Passion").



### *Panagia of the Angels*

A slight variant of the Panagia of the Passion is the type called the Panagia of the Angels. This icon is in every respect the same as the preceding one, except that Christ does not look at the Angel with the cross, but at the Theotokos instead.

The inscription of this icon is: ΜΡ ΘΥ Η ΠΑΝΑΓΙΑ ΤΩΝ ΑΓΓΕΛΩΝ ("The Panagia of the Angels").



### *Panagia the Fount of Life*

The icon which is inscribed "The Fount of Life" is seen in both murals and panel icons. It is placed on the iconostasis and the proskynetáron of churches which are dedicated to "The Fount of Life," (*Zoodóchos Peghí*). This icon is also seen in the dome of the Phiales of the monasteries of the Holy Mountain of Athos. A Phiale is the sacred fount that stands near the main church (*katholikón*) of a monastery. It consists of a large basin with a dome above it that rests on columns connected at the upper end by round arches of brick and at the lower part by sculptured marble slabs. It is used for preparing holy water (*hagiasmós*) on the first day of each month.

This icon is chiefly intended to express the fact that *the Theotókos* gave birth to Christ, Who is viewed as the provider of the life-giving spiritual water. For Christ said to the Samaritan woman: "If thou

knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee, give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee Living Water" (John 4:10; cf. John 7:38). In the *Akathistos Hymn* the Theotokos is spoken of as "the inexhaustible Fount of the living water." "Fount of Life" is a phrase that appears in the Canon on the Conception of Saint Anna and elsewhere.

The idea of the Theotokos as the Fount of Life is expressed in some icons in a simple manner, either by the portrayal of the Theotokos alone, or by showing her with the Child Christ in a baptismal basin with water flowing from it, and a few other figures. In other icons the idea is expressed elaborately. At the Monastery of Chora (Kharieh Djami) in Constantinople, a fourteenth century mosaic icon representing the Theotokos as the Fount of Life simply shows her alone, from the waist up, with hands raised sideways in prayer.

Another simple and beautiful representation of the theme of The Fount of Life is a fresco in the Chapel of Saint George at the Athonite Monastery of Saint Paul. Here, the Theotokos is shown seated in a baptismal font holding the Child Christ. To her right stands Solomon the Prophet-king holding an open scroll on which is written: "I beheld thee O Virgin as a closed garden and a sealed fount." This wall painting dates from 1423.

A depiction similar to the second, dating from the fourteenth century, survives in the Church of Saints Theodore at Mystra. Here, too, the Panagia and the Child are shown in a baptismal font, flanked on either side by an Angel.<sup>1</sup>

These icons should serve as archetypes for iconographers, rather than the over elaborate ones described by Dionysios of Fournas<sup>2</sup> and Kontoglou.<sup>3</sup> They state that among the features to be included in the icon are fortification walls, kings, patriarchs, other bishops, priests, deacons, crowds of people—men, women,

<sup>1</sup> See Kalokyris, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> *Hermeneia tes Zographikés Téchnes*, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> *Ekphrasis*, Vol. 1, pp. 261-262.

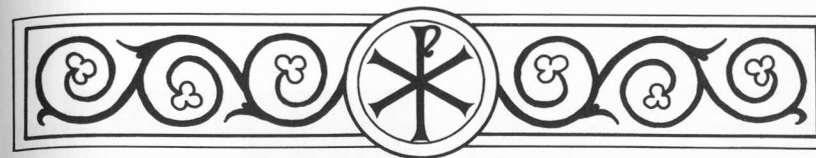


PANAGIA THE FOUNT OF LIFE  
Monastery of Chora, Constantinople. Fourteenth century.

and children. This prototype, as Kalokyris explains, is inspired by a spring outside the fortification walls of Constantinople whose waters were reputed to have healing properties and prompted Emperor Leo the Thracian (fifth century) to build a church there dedicated to the Theotokos. Many persons went to that spring to be healed.

The prototype described by Dionysios and Kontoglou is not suitable, for two reasons. The first reason is the fact that it emphasizes material, physical water, rather than spiritual, divine water, which is provided by Christ. The second reason is the fact that the prototype is *unduly complex*, distracts from what is *essential*. Undue complexity is something alien to the spiritual, Byzantine tradition of iconography.

The inscription of the icons is: ΜΡ ΘΥ, Η ΖΩΟΔΟΧΟΣ ΠΗΓΗ ("Mother of God, the Fount of Life"). At the uppermost part of the icon appears the first part of the inscription; near the hands or shoulders of the Theotokos, the second part.



## CHAPTER IV

## SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

**N**EXT TO THE FIGURE of Christ and the Theotokos, that of Saint John the Baptist and Forerunner occupies an important place in traditional Orthodox iconography. The emphasis given to him is based on what is said about him in the Gospels, particularly by Christ Himself. The Lord said: "He is more than a Prophet. For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:9-11).

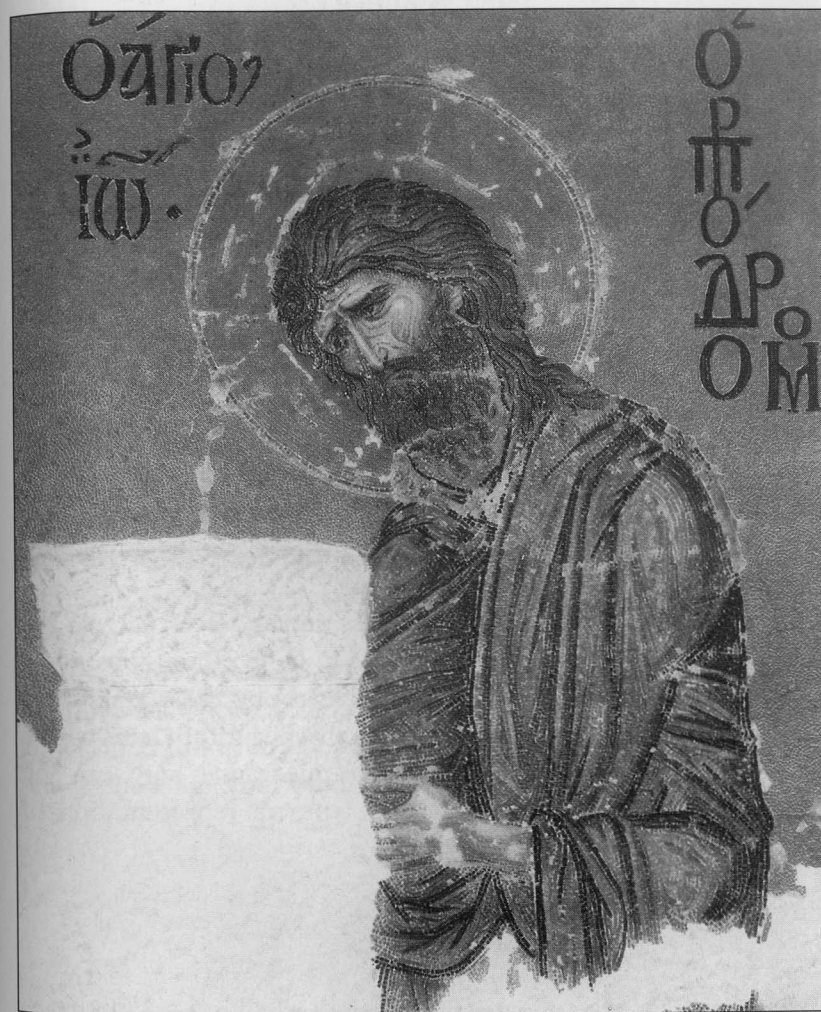
A large panel icon showing him is always placed on the iconostasis next to that of Christ. Sometimes it is placed next to the icon of the Theotokos holding the Child Christ. When the iconostasis has a second tier of icons, smaller than those of the lower tier, arranged in the form of a Great Déesis, the Baptist is shown here, too. Over the Beautiful Gate is placed a Small Déesis or Trímorphon,<sup>1</sup> with Christ at the center, flanked on His right side by the Theotokos and on His left side by the Baptist, both turned towards Him in an attitude of prayer. To the right

<sup>1</sup> A Greek word that means "having three figures."





SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST  
Older type. Mosaic. Church of Daphni. c. 1000.



SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST  
Older type. Mosaic, detail from a Déesis in the Church of Hagia Sophia, Constantinople. Twelfth century.

and the left of the Small Déesis are panel icons of six Apostles turned towards Christ, thus forming a Great Déesis.<sup>1</sup>

The Baptist appears also in two icons of the Dodekáorton, both on panels and in murals: in the icon of the Baptism and in that of the Resurrection or Descent into Hades. In the first, he is shown standing on the bank of the Jordan baptizing Christ, while in the second he is often depicted together with other figures of the Old Testament, such as the Righteous Abel and the Prophets David and Solomon.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes, he is depicted alone, in an appropriate place. Thus, in the Church of Daphní, near Athens, he is depicted, half figure, in the conch of the prothesis.

If the church is domed and the dome is decorated with mosaics or wall paintings, Saint John is included in the circular zone that is immediately next to the circle which encloses Christ Pantocrator, together with holy Angels and the Theotokos. He is depicted on the west side of the zone, the Theotokos on the east side, and the Angels between them. All are shown full-figure with halos.<sup>3</sup>

Functionally, the icon of the Baptist on the lower part of the iconostasis is the most important. It is in large dimensions, closest to the congregation, can be seen clearly by the worshippers as they look forward to the region of the Beautiful Gate—where the officiating clergy make their appearance—and can be approached and kissed. One of two types of representation of the Baptist are utilized here.

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. One of this work, pp. 59-60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.



### *The Older Type*

The older and still used form of Saint John the Baptist on the iconostasis shows him half figure turned to the right, towards Christ (Whose icon is set immediately next to his) with hands stretched out to Him in prayer.

One of the best depictions of the older type is a fifteenth century icon at the Monastery of Vatopedi, shown on page 65 of Volume One. Here, although the Baptist is turned to the right, both his eyes are shown. Their expression, and that of his hands, is one of a calm, prayerful state and inner strength. His hair is long and tufted. His body is all covered with garments.

The inscription of this icon is: Ὁ ἈΓΙΟΣ ἸΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ὁ ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟΣ ("Saint John Forerunner"). This is divided into two parts, written near the middle of the icon; the first article and the two words that follow it are inscribed at the right of the saint; the second article and the word that follows it over his left shoulder.

When this archetype originated is not known. Among the outstanding early depictions of the Baptist in bust, without wings, is a mosaic in the Church of Hósios Lukás in Boeotia (c. 1000) and one in the Church of Daphní near Athens (c. 1100).



### *The Later Type*

The Baptist is depicted in full-figure, winged, as follows: He is shown tall, rather slender, with very thin arms and legs, uncovered head, tufted long hair that falls over his back and shoulders, and a facial expression that evinces great faith, fortitude, and humility. He wears an olive-green inner garment and a brownish

mantle that leave one of his arms from the elbow down uncovered and similarly his legs below the knees. He stands between two flint ridges, with his face and body turned to his right, facing Christ, Who is shown at the upper left hand corner of the icon emerging from Heaven and blessing him. The right hand of the Baptist is stretched forward blessing, while with his left hand he holds an open scroll and a long, very thin cross. On the scroll is written, in large capital letters, the following:

Thou seest, O Son of God, what happens to those who censure the faults of persons that do not admit their errors. Behold my head, Herod cut it off.

At the lower left hand corner is shown the head of the Baptist on a platter; while behind his feet there is an axe at the lower part of the trunk of a tree, near the ground.

The basis for this portrayal the Baptist and Forerunner is Scriptural. He is depicted with wings in accordance with the above quoted statement of Jesus that he was sent by God as a "messenger." As we noted earlier, in speaking of Christ as "Messenger of Great Counsel," the Greek word for messenger is *ángelos*, which is the same word that is used in Greek for Angel. Now Angels are represented in iconography with wings. This explains why Saint John the Baptist is painted winged. That his head was cut off at the command of Herod the tetrarch and brought on a platter is a fact stated in the Gospels (Matthew 14:8, Mark 6:25, 28). In accordance with this, his head on a platter is included in the icon. The picturing of an axe at the tree is based on a statement made by the Saint himself. Preaching in the wilderness of Judaea he said: "And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees; therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matthew 3:10).

The inscription of both types of icon depicting him is: Ὁ ἄΓΙΟΣ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟΣ ("Saint John the Forerun-



SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

Later type. Dionysiou Monastery (Athos). Sixteenth century.



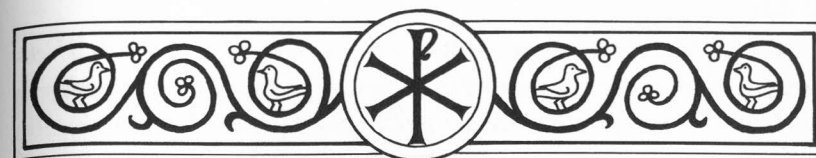
ner"). The word "Baptist" is left out for the sake of brevity—the phrase "the Forerunner" is sufficient to identify the Saint.

The oldest known icon showing Saint John the Forerunner full-figure, winged, is treasured at Arilgie, Serbia, and dates from the closing years of the thirteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Another such icon, done about a century later, is a miniature in a Serbian Psalter at Munich.<sup>2</sup> This type of representation of him found for the first time—so far as is known—its definitive form in a fresco in the Chapel of Zoödóchos Peghí in the Peloponnesian fortress of Geraki. It dates from 1431. The form which this type received in that particular icon was preserved during the whole period of Turkish rule of Greece,<sup>3</sup> and continues to be used.

<sup>1</sup> A. Xyngopoulos, *Schediasma Historías tes Threskeutikés Zographikés Metá ten Hálosin* ("Sketch of the History of Religious Painting After the Fall of Constantinople"), Athens, 1957, p. 49 and Plate 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



## CHAPTER V

## THE ANGELS

ON NOVEMBER 8 every year, the Orthodox Church honors all the holy Angels in a great feast that is named the "Synaxis of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, and of the Rest of the Holy Incorporeal and Heavenly Powers." A *Synaxis* is a gathering together of the faithful in the churches to attend some special celebration. On November 8 they gather together both to honor the Angels as faithful servants of God who are sent to guide, protect, and otherwise aid mankind, and also to commemorate an event of cosmic significance that is mentioned in the Apocalypse, the Book of Revelation. In Chapter 12 of the Apocalypse we read:

There was war in Heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in Heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (12:7-9).

This passage says that the *Archangel Michael together with his angels* fought victoriously against the devil and his angels. It thus constitutes the Scriptural basis for the feast of on the eighth of November in honor of him and of all the holy Angels.

The celebration begins on the eve of November 7 with a Vesper Service. It continues in the morning of the next day with the services of the Orthros and the Divine Liturgy. The Idiomelon which is chanted in the early part of the Orthros says:

Surrounding the immaterial throne, O Spiritual Beings, divine and immaterial, chant to the Ruler God with fiery lips the thrice holy ode: Holy God the Father, Who art beginningless, Holy Son, Who art co-beginningless, Holy Spirit, Who art of one essence and glorified together with the Father and the Son.

The Church terms the Angels "Incorporeal Powers" because, unlike human beings who have a gross material body, the Angels are without such a body.<sup>1</sup> For the same reason the Church also terms them "Spirits" (*Pneúmata*), "Minds" (*Noes*), and "Spiritual Beings" (*Noeraí Ousíai*). As Heaven is their dwelling place, they are also called "Heavenly Beings" (*Ourániai Ousíai*) and "Heavenly Powers" (*Ourániai Dynámeis*). They are called "Minds" because like the human soul or mind they are rational beings, possessing the faculty of reason and the power of free choice and self-control (*to autexoúsion*). Like the human soul, also, they are immortal.<sup>2</sup>

Although of an exalted nature, the Angels are not gods, uncreated beings, but creatures. As the Apostle Paul says, "By God were all things created, those that are in heaven, and those that are on earth, the visible and the invisible" (Colossians 1:16). The same Apostle says that God created all the Angels as "ministering spirits," to be "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14; cf. Psalms 90:11-12—Septuagint).

<sup>1</sup> "An angel is said to be incorporeal and immaterial in comparison with us; for when compared with God, Who alone is incomparable, everything is found to be gross and material; for only the Deity is truly immaterial and incorporeal" (St. John Damascene, *An Exact exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book II, Chapter 3).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*



HOLY ANGELS

Mosaic, detail from the Baptism. Nea Moni, Chios. c. 1050.

The number of Angels is vast. The Prophet Daniel says: "Thousand thousands ministered unto God, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him" (7:10). The names of only three of them are mentioned in Holy Scripture: Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael.

They are distinguished into nine orders: the Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Powers, Authorities, Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. Mention of these orders is made in the Old and the New Testaments.<sup>1</sup>

It is to be noted that the term "Angel" is used in the *broad* sense to denote *all* nine orders of the incorporeal beings, and in a *narrow* sense to denote the *last mentioned order*. Also to be noted is that the term "Powers" is likewise employed both to denote all nine orders and to denote one of the orders.



### *The Nine Orders of Holy Angels*

Systematizing what Scripture says about the diverse Angels, the Church Father known as Saint Dionysios the Areopagite has divided the nine orders (*táxeis*) into three hierarchies, each hierarchy (*hierarchía*) consisting of three orders. The first hierarchy, the highest, consists of the Seraphim (*Seraphím*), the Cherubim (*Cherubím*), and the Thrones (*Thrónoi*); the second, middle hierarchy, of the Dominions (*Kyriótetes*), Powers (*Dynámeis*), and Authorities (*Exousíai*); and the third, the lowest, of the Principalities (*Archai*), Archangels (*Archángeloi*), and Angels (*'Angeloi*). In each of these orders, the first listed one is the highest, while the last named is the lowest.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the Old Testament see especially Isaiah 6:1-3, Genesis 3:24, Exodus 25:18-21, Judges 6:12-22, Psalm 148:1-2. In the New Testament see Romans 8:38, Ephesians 1:21, Colossians 1:16, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Hebrews 9:5, Jude 9, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *The Celestial Hierarchy* (*Perí tes Ouranías Hierarchías*).



SERAPHIM, CHERUBIM, AND ANGELS  
*Cathedral of Cefalù, Sicily. Twelfth century.*



Regarding this systematization, Saint John Damascene says the following:

As that most holy, and sacred, and gifted theologian, Dionysios the Areopagite, says, All theology, that is to say, the holy Scripture, has nine different names for the heavenly beings. These beings that divine master in sacred things divides into three groups, each containing three. And the first group, he says, consists of those who are in God's presence and are said to be directly and immediately one with Him, namely, the Seraphim with their six wings, the many-eyed Cherubim, and the most holy Thrones. The second group is that of the Dominions, the Powers, and the Authorities; and the third and last is that of the Principalities, Archangels, and Angels.<sup>1</sup>

The holy Incorporeal Powers are *honored* by means of hymns which are addressed to them or refer to them, and by being depicted in icons that are venerated by faithful Orthodox Christians. Also, *prayers are addressed to them* as they are to the Saints, as intercessors with God and as our protectors. Noteworthy in this connection is the fact that the *Apódeipnon*, or After-the-supper Service, contains in its closing part a prayer to one's Guardian Angel (*Angelos Phylax*).

### The Fallen Angels

Besides the three hierarchies of Incorporeal Powers or Angels, each having three orders, the Church recognizes the creation of an additional hierarchy of Incorporeal Beings, one whose mem-

<sup>1</sup> *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, ed. by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Vol. IX, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book II, Chapter III, p. 20. I have reworded this paragraph in a few places in order to express better the meaning of certain Greek terms.

bers are not holy but evil, having through pride fallen away from God. This hierarchy consists of the Devil (*Diábolos*) or Satan and of those incorporeal beings under him who followed him. The latter are spoken of in the Divine Scriptures as demons (*daímones*, *daimónia*).

The Devil and the demons are not honored by Christians but are held in aversion, because they seek to lead people to untruth and sinful deeds. For this reason they are *seldom depicted* in Byzantine icons, and when they are depicted their figures are *not emphasized*. They are depicted in *smaller* dimensions than holy Angels, with *diminutive wings*, in *profile* instead of frontally, with *vague, not clearly defined forms*, in *dull* colors—darkish blue or gray—and *never alone* but always with other, larger and non-sinister figures and *away from the center* of the scene.<sup>1</sup> This is in accord with the principle by which Byzantine art abides of *avoiding giving emphasis to what is unholy*. In order to abide here by this principle, Byzantine iconography has to *waive* another of its principles, that of *clarity*, of clearly defined form.<sup>2</sup> In following the principle of not emphasizing evil or the ugly, this art observes the principle of *measure*. It neither excludes completely the depiction of demons, nor seeks to focus attention on them, representing them as powerful and terror-inspiring ugly beings. It could not exclude them altogether from its works, for there are many references to the Devil and to demons in Holy Scripture and in the lives of saints; and it could not emphasize them without annulling its anagogic, uplifting function.

The iconographer Ioannis Vranos has devoted a chapter of his book *Theory of Iconography* to an illuminating discussion of this topic.<sup>3</sup> He particularly calls attention to the fact that the Roman Catholic Church has gone seriously wrong in this matter. "From

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the Ladder of Divine Ascent in Vol. One, and pp. 220, 223, and pp. 28-29, 40.

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. One, pp. 39-40.

<sup>3</sup> *Theoria Hagiographias*, Thessaloniki, 1977.

the time of the Schism and henceforth it began to use naturalistic paintings in its churches instead of the spiritual icons which are used by Orthodoxy. The Devil in Papal icons is depicted as dreadful, horrible.... His aspect evokes agitation in the beholder, or repulsiveness and disgust. This is inappropriate and anti-spiritual; it does not edify."<sup>1</sup>

Amplifying on his rejection of such images, Vranos remarks: "Not only Christ defeated the Devil, but all Christians, too, with Christ's power defeat him and despise him." In support of this, he quotes from the New Testament and adds that only for great sinners is the Devil dreadful, because they are not shielded by the power of Christ.

Regarding the Devil and demons, Saint John Damascene says the following:<sup>2</sup>

He who from among the Angelic powers was the leader of the terrestrial order, and into whose hands God committed the guardianship of the earth, was not made wicked in nature but was good, and made for good ends, and received from the Creator no trace whatever of evil in himself. But he did not sustain the brightness and the honor which the Creator had bestowed on him, and of his free choice became roused against God Who created him, and determined to rise in rebellion against Him: and he was the first to depart from good and become evil.... And along with him an innumerable host of angels subject to him were torn away and followed him and shared in his fall. Wherefore, being of the same nature as the Angels, they became wicked, turning away at their own free choice from good to evil....

All wickedness, then, and all impure passions have been conceived by them. But while the freedom to suggest evil to man has been permitted to them, they do not have the power to overmaster any one. For we have it in our power to accept or not to accept their suggestions. Wherefore there has been

<sup>1</sup> P. 193.

<sup>2</sup> *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book II, Chapter III, pp. 20-21, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. IX.

prepared for the Devil and his demons, and those who follow him, fire unquenchable and everlasting punishment.

With regard to the depiction of the Incorporeal Beings in icons, it may be asked how can they be depicted, considering the fact that they are bodiless? The answer to this question is that this is possible because they appeared to certain holy men and women in various forms, circumscribed.<sup>1</sup> The iconographer, reading about these appearances, can portray them according to the descriptions given of their visions.<sup>2</sup>

Another question, related to the preceding one, is this: Why is it that these beings, who are incorporeal, have been seen with wings, with many eyes, as having flaming wheels, and so on? The answer to this question is given by St. John Damascene. He says: "*It is not as they really are that Angels reveal themselves to the worthy men to whom God wishes them to appear, but in a changed form which the beholders are capable of seeing.*"<sup>3</sup> And a little later he adds: "They take different forms at the bidding of their Master, God, and thus reveal themselves to men and unveil mysteries to them."<sup>4</sup>



### *The Seraphim*

With this general discussion of the Angels as helpful background, let us now proceed to an examination of the iconography that pertains to them, beginning with the iconography of the highest order, that of the Seraphim.

<sup>1</sup> "The Angels are circumscribed: for when they are in the Heaven they are not on the earth: and when they are sent by God down to the earth they do not remain in the Heaven" (*An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book II, Chapter III, p. 19, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. IX).

<sup>2</sup> See Vol. One of the present work, p. 237.

<sup>3</sup> *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, p. 19, in the edition listed above.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

These Heavenly Beings are mentioned only once in Holy Scripture, in the Old Testament. In Isaiah, Chapter 6, we read: "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the house filled with His glory. Above it stood the Seraphim: each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory" (6:1-3).

In accordance with the vision of the Prophet Isaiah, the Seraphim are depicted with six wings: two raised over their head, two at their sides, and two covering their legs. Their face, however, is not covered. It is depicted as that of a young man with curly hair. In their right hand they hold a staff, at the top of which is a tablet with the words "Holy, Holy, Holy." Although Isaiah says that "the face of Seraphim was covered by the wings," the iconographer leaves it exposed for functional reasons—because the face is the most expressive part of the body. The representation of the Seraphim with their face covered by their wings is left to another sacred art, that of hymnography. This art cannot represent the facial expression of the Seraphim, but it can effectively speak of the wings as covering their face, giving the reason for this. The hymnographer tells us that the Seraphim and the Cherubim cover their faces with their wings because they cannot endure beholding God's dazzling radiance.

Sometimes the Seraphim are shown with their hands and feet invisible, covered by the wings. Representations of the Seraphim have as their inscription the single word *ΣΕΡΑΦΙΜ* ("Seraphim").

In the Church of Hagia Sophia at Constantinople the Seraphim are depicted below the base of the central dome, one in each of the four pendentives. In subsequent iconography the pendentives have been used by iconographers for the four Evangelists.<sup>1</sup> The

Seraphim sometimes are seen within the dome itself, in the zone immediately next to the circle that surrounds the Pantocrator. They are shown here together with Cherubim and Angels of the third Hierarchy, flanking the Theotokos and Saint John the Baptist.

Also, Seraphim are painted over the Holy Table, in the representation of the Divine Liturgy in the apse of the Holy Bema,<sup>1</sup> as well as in the Second Coming of Christ, in the narthex.



### *The Cherubim*

The second group of Angels of the First Celestial Hierarchy, called Cherubim, are mentioned many times in the Old Testament and once in the New Testament (Hebrews 9:5). The longest account of them is given by the Prophet Ezekiel in Chapters I and X of his book, where he describes his visions of them. Ezekiel says that one day the heavens were opened and he saw divine visions. The most striking of these was that of "the likeness of four living creatures [Cherubim]. And this was their appearance: they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. And their feet were straight feet.... And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides.... Their wings were joined one to another...stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. As for the likeness of their faces, they had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side,...the face of an ox, on the left side, and the face of an eagle.... The spirit of the living creatures was in wheels.... There was a wheel within a wheel.... And the rims of the wheels were full of eyes round about. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them" (1:1-19).

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106-108.

<sup>1</sup> See Vol. One, pp. 85-91.



In Byzantine iconography, the Cherubim are depicted with one face, the human. The other three faces mentioned by Ezekiel are omitted. In this, the sacred art follows the principle of simplicity and that of functionality. The inclusion of the other three heads would tend to bewilder the onlooker, and none of them is as well-adapted to express the holiness of these celestial beings as is the human face. Also, the "wheels" which the Prophet saw associated with the Cherubim are usually omitted, for the same reasons.

Quite pertinent here is the following remark of Saint Dionysios the Areopagite: "We cannot, like the many, profanely think of the heavenly and godlike minds as having many feet and many faces; as shaped to resemble the brutishness of oxen, or the wildness of lions; or as having the curved beak of the eagle, or the wings and feathers of birds. We must not imagine them as fashioned like fiery wheels, moving above the sky,...or like any of those varied revealed symbols that have been handed down to us."<sup>1</sup>

The shapes in which Ezekiel saw the Cherubim are said here to be *symbolic*. What some of these symbols signify—the lion, the ox, and the eagle—is explained by Dionysios later in his treatise *The Celestial Hierarchy*.<sup>2</sup> This knowledge, however, is not in the possession of the general beholder of holy icons, so that for him such symbols do not edify but instead perplex. Only the *wings* of the Cherubim, as well as of the other Incorporeal Powers, are meaningful to the general spectator. The large, powerful wings are understood to symbolize both the lofty spiritual state of these supernatural beings, and the readiness and speed with which they execute the will of God as His messengers.

The Cherubim appear less often than the Seraphim in the

<sup>1</sup> *Peri tes Ouraniou Hierarchias* ("Concerning the Celestial Hierarchy"), in Denys l'Areopagite, *La Hiérarchie Céleste*, of the series *Sources Chrétiennes*, 2nd ed., Paris, 1970, I. 3, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XV. 8, pp. 184-186.

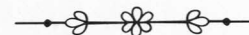
iconography of churches. Like the Seraphim, they are sometimes included in the decoration of the dome, in the zone around the Pantocrator. In the mural showing the Second Coming of Christ, a Cherubim is depicted standing at the gate of Paradise holding a fiery sword. This is in accordance with the passage in the book of Genesis which says: "God drove out [of the Garden of Eden] man; and He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (3:24).

Although the Seraphim and the Cherubim are seldom seen in *iconography*, they are often mentioned in the *hymnography* of the Church. The best known reference to the Cherubim in hymnography is the hymn that is chanted at the Great Entrance of the Divine Liturgy, called the "Cherubic Hymn." It says:

Let us who mystically portray the Cherubim, and chant the thrice-holy hymn unto the life-creating Trinity, lay aside all earthly care, that we may receive the King of all, escorted invisibly by the angelic orders. Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Hymnography is better suited than is iconography for calling attention to the Seraphim and the Cherubim, praising them and teaching us about them.

Representations of the Cherubim have the inscription: ΧΕΡΟΥΒΙΜ ("Cherubim").



### *Archangels and Angels*

Of the other orders of Incorporeal Powers that were listed earlier in this chapter: the Thrones, Dominions, Powers, Authorities, Principalities, Archangels, and Angels, only the last two are represented in icons. The reason for this is the fact that there are definite events in Holy Scripture that pertain to the Archangels and Angels, but none involving the Thrones, Dominions, Author-

ities, and Principalities. These are simply mentioned. Their character and activities are not described.

Three Angels are referred to by name in Scripture: Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Michael is mentioned in Daniel (10:13, 21, 12:1), in Revelation (12:7-12), and in Jude (9); Gabriel, in Daniel (8:16, 9:21), and in the Gospel according to Luke (1:11-38); and Raphael only in Tobit (3:6, 16, 11:1, 6, 12:15). All three are spoken of in Church writings as *Archangels*, and icons that depict them have the inscription "Archangel." However, in Scripture, the word *Archangel* is used only once, in referring to the Archangel Michael (Jude 9). He is also spoken of as *Archon*, "Prince" (Daniel 10:13, 21). Archangel Raphael is referred to by an equivalent term: *Megas*, "Great" (Tobit 3:16). The greatness of Gabriel is indicated in Scripture not by a word but by the fact that he was chosen to bring to mankind a message of cosmic significance: the Incarnation of the Divine Logos, Christ.

*Michael* and *Gabriel* occupy a conspicuous place in iconography. Raphael is shown only in the icon that pertains to his appearance to Tobit and Tobias, Old Testament figures. Konoglou describes this icon as follows:

A house. At the center the Archangel Raphael holding a scepter and blessing. Prostrate on the floor are Tobit and his son Tobias venerating him (Tobit 12:16). This icon has the following inscription: Ὁ ΤΩΒΙΤ ΚΑΙ Ὁ ΤΩΒΙΑΣ ΠΡΟΣΚΥΝΟΥΝΤΕΣ Τὸν ἈΡΧΑΓΓΕΛΟΝ ΡΑΦΑΗΛ ("Tobit and Tobias Venerating Archangel Raphael").<sup>1</sup>

The inscription on the icons of Archangel Michael is: Ὁ ἈΡΧ ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ("Archangel Michael"); on those of Archangel Gabriel: Ὁ ἈΡΧ ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ ("Archangel Gabriel").

The Orthodox Church, as we noted earlier, honors all the Incorporeal Powers *together* in a special service on November 8. It also honors *separately* Archangel Michael on September 6, in

<sup>1</sup> Ekphrasis, Vol. 1, p. 299.



ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

Panel icon. Byzantine Museum, Athens. Fourteenth century.



ARCHANGEL GABRIEL  
Mosaic detail. Church of Daphni, c. 1100.



ARCHANGEL GABRIEL  
Panel icon. Iviron Monastery (Athos). Seventeenth century.



commemoration of the miracle he performed at Colossae (Chonae), and Archangel Gabriel on March 26—the day after the feast of the Annunciation—and again on July 13.

Archangels and Angels are depicted in various icons wearing a tunic and a mantle. Sometimes they are represented—when there is a special reason for this—dressed as Deacons, wearing sticharia girded with an orarion. In their right hand they hold a *staff*. This symbolizes the *authority* they receive from God as His messengers. In their left hand they hold a *disk* with the sacred monogram X, which denotes Christ and the fact that they are His servants, or the Cross, which signifies the same. With regard to the *circular* form of the plate that bears the monogram X or the Cross, Saint Symeon of Thessaloniki (14th century) says that this form is “a theological symbol, teaching us that although Christ became incarnate, as God, He has neither a beginning nor an end”<sup>1</sup> in time.

In modernistic icons, instead of the disk with this monogram, the Angels are represented holding a *sphere*, apparently as a symbol of the universe. The use of the sphere is probably the result of misinterpreting the disk that is seen in older icons, taking it for a sphere. An Angel cannot properly be depicted holding (symbolically) the universe, for this would suggest that he is almighty, like God.

Angels are *always* represented wearing garments, never naked as in modern Western religious paintings, where they are depicted as naked infants. Also, they are represented as *beardless young men, never as infants*. In Scripture, Angels are described as appearing in visions as adult male human beings (*andres*), not as children. The Evangelist Luke, describing the experience of the Myrrh-bearing Women at the sepulchre of Christ, says that they saw there a “young man” (*neanískos*)—an Angel—“clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted” (16:5).

<sup>1</sup> Symeon, Archbishop of Thessaloniki, *Ta Hápana* (“All the Works”), Thessaloniki, c. 1960, p. 359.

Further, Angels are depicted with *curly hair tied neatly with a folded kerchief (mandélion)*, whose ends extend loosely in the halo that surrounds their heads. As we noted earlier, the heads of the Seraphim and the Cherubim also are depicted in this fashion. Saint Symeon of Thessaloniki explains the use of the folded kerchief over the hair as signifying that just as their hair is tied neatly together, so are their thoughts and feelings kept under control—directed towards God and their service as His messengers, not being allowed to wander away. The *loose ends* of the kerchief in the halo are interpreted by Saint Symeon as symbolizing the goodness of the Angels that emanates from them towards us.<sup>1</sup>

Angels—and by this term we mean, as elsewhere in this section, Archangels also—are shown with two wings. These, as we noted earlier, are symbolic in nature. Both the Old and the New Testament speak of Angels as having appeared in visions simply as *men (andres)*. No mention is made of their having wings. They are depicted with wings in order to emphasize their *upward, heavenly orientation*, and the fact that they are *ready* messengers and servants of God to men, *quick* to execute His will. Angels began to be represented in icons with wings in the fifth century.<sup>2</sup>

These heavenly beings are conspicuous in Byzantine iconography. They appear in five of the Dodekáorton icons: the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Baptism, the Ascension, and the Dormition of the Theotokos. Angels are also shown in the icons of the Panagia of the Angels and the Panagia of the Passion. And there is an Angel in the scene of the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple. Often, the Archangels Michael and Gabriel are painted on the upper part of the side doors of the iconostasis: Michael on the north door and Gabriel on the south door. In recent years, the innovation of depicting them on the *whole* door has been introduced. This is *inappropriate*. It gives undue emphasis to them, greater than that which is given to Christ, the Theo-

<sup>1</sup> Walter Lowrie, *Art in the Early Church*, p. 137



SYNAXIS OF THE INCORPOREAL POWERS  
Panel icon, Monastery of Docheiariou (Athos). 1667.

tokos, and Saint John the Baptist, whose figures occupy only *half* of the space allotted by this innovation to the Archangels! Sometimes the Archangels are depicted in the main eastern apse, flanking the Platytera: Michael to her right and Gabriel to her left.

In some churches that have a large and tall eastern apse the Divine Liturgy has been painted there, and Angels dressed as deacons are portrayed assisting Christ, Who is shown officiating in Bishop's vestments. In churches with a large central dome, Angels are painted in the circular zone around Christ Pantocrator, together with Seraphim and Cherubim.

Among the other well-known and significant icons in which Angels are shown is that of the Myrrh-bearing Women, discussed in Volume One;<sup>1</sup> and that which shows the great Ascetic Pachomios gazing in wonder upon an Angel dressed as a monk holding an open scroll on which is written: "In this habit (*schema*), O Pachomios, will all flesh be saved;" and the icon of The Synaxis of the Incorporeal Powers.

Shown in the last mentioned icon are many Angels grouped together in rows. At the middle of the front row two Angels hold an icon of Christ. It has the inscription: Ἡ ΣΥΝΑΞΙΣ ΤΩΝ ἈCΩΜΑΤΩΝ ΔΥΝΑΜΕΩΝ ("The Synaxis of the Incorporeal Powers"). This name is given to it both because so many Angels are shown gathered together, and because it is the icon specially displayed on the feast that is so named.

The icon is placed on the church's special Proskynetáron on November 8, the day of the feast of the Incorporeal Powers. It is a most fitting object of veneration for pious Orthodox Christians, in whose mind on that occasion are thoughts such as those expressed by the following contrition-evoking hymns:

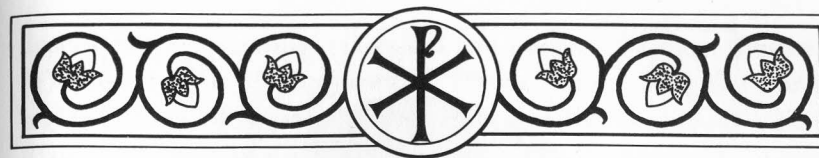
<sup>1</sup> P. 193.

Archangels, Angels, Principalities, Thrones, Dominions, six-winged Seraphim and many-eyed divine Cherubim, instruments of wisdom, Powers and most divine Authorities, intercede with Christ that peace and the great mercy be granted to our souls.<sup>1</sup>

Longing to praise the choirs of incorporeal powers, let us who dwell on the earth imitate as far as is possible their holiness, mortifying everything sinful in us, and entreating them, whom we laud in hymns, to deliver us from all deceits of our enemy, so that we might receive God's mercy.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Troparion chanted at the Vespers of the Sunday of the First mode of Byzantine chant, contained in the *Parakletiké*.

<sup>2</sup> A Kathisma that is chanted at the feast of November 8, contained in the November *Menaion*.



# APPENDIX

## SAINT NECTARIOS OF AEGINA ON TYPES IN ICONOGRAPHY

**I**N HIS WORK *Study Concerning Holy Icons*, Saint Nectarios calls attention to the fact that already in the sacred paintings of the early centuries of the Christian era there is a *striking similarity* in the portrayal of various Biblical personages and scenes. This similarity, he remarks, can be explained only on the assumption that *the Church had formulated at an early time certain canons regarding the depiction of various personages and scenes. Such canons would exclude the free imagination of each artist.* "The Church," he says, "undoubtedly prescribed certain *hieratic types*.... These types, unified, presented a kind of *didactic system*, a kind of historical and allegorical cycle for the use of *Christian artists*."<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of depicting these consecrated types was "to contribute to the edification of the faithful.... Through them, the Church recommends to the faithful a hidden, spiritual teaching."<sup>2</sup>

Citing examples of "types," Saint Nectarios mentions and

<sup>1</sup> *Melête perí ton Hagíon Eikónon* ("Study Concerning Holy Icons"), ed. by Constantine Cavarnos, Athens, 1997, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*





SAINT NECTARIOS OF AEGINA  
Panel icon by Photios Kontoglou. 1963.

describes the following: (1) Adam and Eve; (2) Noah in the Ark; (3) The Sacrifice of Abraham; (4) Moses Approaching the Burning Bush; (5) Moses Striking the Rock with his Rod; (6) Elias Rising to the Heavens; (7) Tobias and the Fish; (8) Christ, (9) the Apostles Peter and Paul.<sup>1</sup>

These scenes are observable in frescoes of the catacombs of Rome that date from the second to the fourth century.

He adds that the choice of subjects made from the accounts in the Bible for the formation of compositions and *types* for *Christian art* was automatically *new*. It was freely directed by the spirit and the system of symbolism of the Gospels and the writings of the Apostles.<sup>2</sup>

One more important point made by Saint Nectarios is that the types which constituted the cycle of icons at that early period became *unchangeable*, so to speak. He adds that he says "so to speak," because during various centuries these types underwent some slight variations.<sup>3</sup>

The last remark is consonant with what Photios Kontoglou says about *the formation of archetypes from the early types*. He remarks: "The *archetypes* of Byzantine iconography are the result of centuries of spiritual life, Christian experience, genius and work. The iconographers who developed them regarded their work as awesome, like the dogmas of the true Faith, and they *worked*, with humility and piety, *on types that had been handed down to them by earlier iconographers*, avoiding all inopportune and inappropriate changes. Through long elaboration, these various representations were freed from everything superfluous and inconstant, and attained the greatest and most perfect expression and power."<sup>4</sup>

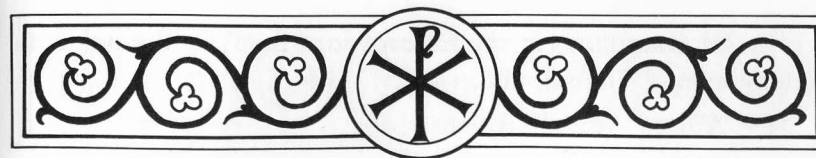
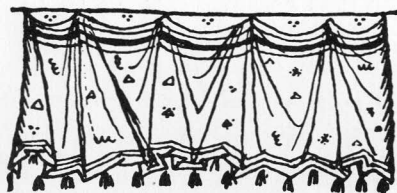
<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. pp. 37-40, 67-68.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted from Volume One of this work, p. 29.

The fact that Byzantine iconography has faithfully followed the ancient types as developed into archetypes sharply distinguishes it from Western Renaissance religious art. The latter abandoned these. Instead, it used actual men, women, youths and infants who posed for them, as models, and presented them according to the fancy of each artist. Thus the difference between Western Renaissance religious art and Byzantine iconography is the difference between the worldly and the spiritual, between Earth and Heaven.



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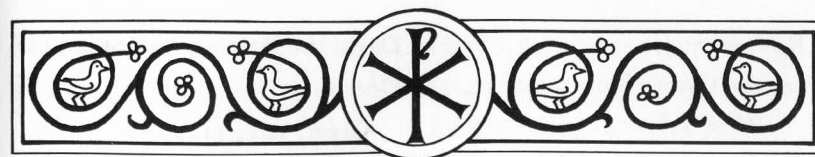
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